

On Ecclesiology, “The Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian
Community,” Karl Barth in Dialogue with the Thought of Joseph Ratzinger

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ABSTRACT

On Ecclesiology in “The Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian Community”

Karl Barth in Dialogue with the Thought of Joseph Ratzinger

Michael Haist Jr.

This thesis is a dialogue between Karl Barth and Joseph Ratzinger on the topic of ecclesiology. The thesis follows the format of section 67 of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, which deals with principles of ecclesiology in the context of the Doctrine of Reconciliation. The question this thesis addresses is whether there is any continuity between the thought of the two figures on certain topics of ecclesiology that are covered by this section of *CD*. There are several issues on which they agree. On the final topic, Church law, Barth suggests that laws held by different communities can be true despite being potentially contradictory. This paper posits that Ratzinger is in agreement with Barth on this last point.

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Introduction

This thesis is an ecumenical work. The work is to compare and contrast the ecclesiological thought of two figures, each representing a major strain within their respective denominations. The purpose is to present a dialogue between a Catholic and a Protestant on this important issue, exploring areas on which they agree or disagree. The work begins with Karl Barth, whose work is then put in dialogue with Joseph Ratzinger's.

Perhaps the most glaring inconsistency in Church life is the separation of the body of Christ into various denominations. This division sends a confusing message to those within and without the Church. How can one religion be scattered across such a variety of interpretations and practical differences? All Christian Churches would cite the person of Jesus Christ as the founding figure on which the religion is based. Most would affirm the creeds developed in the first four ecumenical Councils. Yet each reads these historical factors through their own interpretive lenses. The problem of a divided Church cuts the legs off of the Christian message: Jesus Christ is in the process of reconciling himself to the world. With the division of his Churches, a reasonable grain of salt must be added to the divine promise of universal reconciliation.

On this issue of reconciliation between the variety of Christian Churches, much has been written. Much success has been enjoyed in practical gestures to extend the communion of one body to another. The Church, in many instances, appears to be in the process of reunion.

The goal of many ecumenical efforts is in positively identifying the other body as authentically Christian, sharing in enough of the core doctrines to constitute an intellectual unity. This has resulted in a general relaxation of the rules of sharing in works projects, worship

services, and the administering of certain sacraments, most notably and commonly the eucharist. Beyond the intellectual assent and cooperation in certain activities, the Churches remain separate. They are likely to stay separate for many years to come. The reason for this is impossible to know, yet it can be speculated on.

Perhaps most obviously, these different organizations have conducted themselves as different Church bodies for many years, decades as individual congregations and centuries as denominations. So beyond the doctrinal differences of the Reformation and the *filioque*, among a thousand other factors, the simple fact of operating as separate bodies for so many years might be the greatest block to a full reunion. This is an ecclesiological issue. It is one that is not easily untangled. The big questions of ecumenism are being put off as long as Christians do not mind continuing to worship in the myriad separate houses of Christianity.

The purpose of this thesis is not to suggest an order for ecclesial unity. That is a task beyond the scope of any academic work, best left to the centuries ahead as future generations of Christians face the challenges of reunification. The purpose of this work is to begin the dialogue that one day may be at the centre of ecumenical efforts. As stated above, one of the most confounding questions of Church unity is about the reconciliation of purpose and function across many traditions. Centuries of dialogues must take place, and centuries of experimentation will probably follow. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to this dialogue, specifically between Roman Catholic and Protestant ecclesiologies.

To begin this dialogue, this thesis uses the works of Karl Barth and Joseph Ratzinger, both extremely important and influential to theology in the 20th and 21st centuries. Their works have been read and translated so that people around the world might have the opportunity to

study at the feet of the masters. Their legacies are marked by philosophical and intellectual breakthroughs in theology, as well as in pastoral kindness and faithfulness in their personal lives.

These figures are significant to this study because each represents a major contingent of their respective denominations. Barth is described as the unofficial founder of Neo-Orthodoxy, a pursuit of God that has influenced huge swaths of Protestants. Ratzinger is influential of course because of his position as the 265th Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. Prior to his appointment to the highest office in Christendom, Ratzinger was one of the most sought-after and widely read theologians in Catholicism, and beyond; perhaps *the* most for a period in the 1980s and 1990s.

These figures are especially useful to a study like this for the sake of their fame and their differences. As this is not an in-depth study of the history of ecclesiology, or the history of ecumenical ecclesiology, it is entirely appropriate to fix onto two such famous and well-studied figures.

The first chapter of this thesis discusses the historical context for this dialogue. It is concerned with Barth's historical dialogue with Catholicism. As Barth was facing his final years, Ratzinger's influence was expanding. The meeting of these two figures in the dialogue of this work is preceded by an actual meeting, in the autumn of 1966 as the sun set on Vatican II. The circumstances around this meeting will be presented, based mostly on Barth's own recollections of the event in his book *Ad Limina Apostolorum*.

Most of the first chapter will be concerned with reporting on Barth's major interactions with Catholicism. These discussions will not go to a great depth. They will instead present somewhat basic reports on the issues discussed, the outcomes, and theories on how these events might have impacted Barth's theology.

The publication of *Church Dogmatics*¹, published during his tenure in Göttingen, saw him in conflict with Roman Catholic theologians. The preface to the first volume of *CD* stated simply that the classic theory of *analogia entis* was an invention of the Antichrist.² Such strong sentiments were naturally not conducive to peaceful dialogue between Catholics and Protestants. Rather some heated debates were offered. Barth's role among Catholics was healed (or the process of the healing was begun) with the publication of Hans Urs von Balthasar's *Theology of Karl Barth*. This Catholic perspective prevailed as the standard interpretation of Barth's theology for decades. This work continued the dialogue between Catholic and Protestant theologies that Barth began so inauspiciously in his preface to *CD I*. The dialogue was peaceful and would continue to be so. Several other Catholics, notably Hans Küng, had reached across the nave to their separated brethren in attempts to appropriate Barth's work or to suggest areas of continuity.

The final word in Barth's own dialogue with Catholicism came just less than two years before his death. Reflecting on his post-conciliar visit to Rome, during which he spent an hour in discussion with Pope Paul VI, he reported that he wished that the word Protestantism would be deleted from our vocabulary.³ Such a transition in his life, to go from apparently dismissing Aquinas to claiming that the Protestant Reformation was essentially finished, makes Barth extremely useful in continuing the dialogue between Catholics and Protestants. Alas Barth died while the flame of hope lit by Vatican II was still hot. Ratzinger's entry into this dialogue is at this point.

Barth's career is just ending within a few years of the Council and Ratzinger's career

¹ *Church Dogmatics* will henceforth be abbreviated to *CD*.

² Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics* (T.T. Clark 1960) Part I, Volume 1. xiii

³ Barth, Karl. *Ad Limina Apostolorum: An Appraisal of Vatican II*. Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1968. 17

started just a few years prior to it. Both figures orbit it, as with all 20th century theologians. What makes these two so interesting is Barth's faith in it and Ratzinger's criticisms of it. As a Catholic, Ratzinger is bound to the Council in several ways. He worked as an expert at the council, serving Cardinal Josef Frings, even writing his speech.⁴ He anticipated the Council. After its close, he reported on it in his book *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, which offered some criticisms. He was also instrumental in several conservative interpretations of the Council.

Since Barth died before the end of the 1960s he was not witness to conservative Catholic interpretations of the Council. So he stands at its conclusion, a Protestant confident on the reunification of the Christian Church. Ratzinger stands as a man with several decades left to his career in which he must react constantly to the decisions of the Council. This historical context offers a perspective on their dialogue that shows both figures crossing into the other's territory. This is interesting ground for an ecumenical dialogue.

With that ground covered, the rest of this thesis explores Barth's ecclesiology as presented in §67 of *CD* and present pertinent comments from Ratzinger's body of work. The theory is that Ratzinger's Catholic perspective will demonstrate areas of continuity and discontinuity with Barth. Examining these instances will add to the larger ecumenical dialogue. Barth's role in this work is as guide. His configurations, while not exactly standard, are nevertheless widely known and studied. For instance, few Christians would disagree with his statements about the Holy Spirit being the livening force behind the Church. On this, Ratzinger would agree, and would offer nuance to the topic in his explanations of divine-human cooperation in the work of the

⁴ Wicks, Jared. "Six texts by Prof. Joseph Ratzinger as peritus before and during Vatican Council II," *Gregorianum* 89, no. 2 (2008): 234-5.

Church.

The section of Barth's ecclesiology that is studied here details the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Titled "The Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian Community," it is articulated in four subsections. These subsections, "The True Church," "The Growth of the Community," "The Upholding of the Community," and, "The Order of the Community," are the bases on which chapters two through five of this thesis are founded.

My methodology was simply to process each of Barth's points and engage works of Ratzinger that discuss the issue being raised. Each of the subsections in this section of *CD* will be explored, explaining Barth's position. On points throughout, Ratzinger's response, derived from his body of works, will be presented. The two sides of each issue will then be compared and contrasted.

This four-part explanation forms the back bone for Barth's ecclesiology, but is hardly a complete picture of it. Several issues that are particularly Barthian are discussed in this section, including the provisional character of the Church, the work of the Holy Spirit in the upbuilding and the planting of the Church, and a few others. This section, representing some classic Protestant and Calvinist theories, all carefully filtered through Barthian configurations, is a rich source for a dialogue between Catholic and Protestant ecclesiological theories.

CD was, of course, left unfinished prior to Barth's retirement. The fifth volume, on the doctrine of Redemption, was never even begun. The fourth volume, on which this thesis is based, was intended to be comprised of five parts. Four parts of volume four, on Reconciliation, were completed. As stated, this thesis is concerned with *CD* IV, 2.

The assumption of this paper is that the theologies of Karl Barth and Joseph Ratzinger are

compatible. Despite the denominational, national, cultural, and temporal differences separating them, their works can be fairly compared. Of course, their differences cannot be ignored in this process. Rather, pains must be taken to ensure that their differences are preserved so that the truth of the dialogue prevails. Terms must be defined, adequately explaining each participants' meaning. The denominational and cultural biases that might be present in their works must be exposed, for the sake of the clarity of the dialogue. While no one wants to admit that they hold a bias, the authors dealt with here have been thoroughly studied and commented on so any such biases might be rooted out. Several articles theorizing about Barth's fundamental biases have been consulted for this work. Some have suggested a political motive behind his theological work. This is somewhat convincing and can credibly come into play in the discussion of Barth's ecclesiology.

This task of determining biases and defining terms is really the task of examining the context in which each wrote. The political world, the denominational pressures, etc contributed to their final product. These issues cannot be ignored in any sense, but especially not in a dialogue whose players come from such different worlds. When these two have experienced the same, or similar, events, they have had different opportunities to react. For a very broad instance, Barth's written and verbal rejection of Nazism was possible because of his nationality and age. Ratzinger was too young to reject Nazism in a similar spirit. Likewise his German nationality would have made political engagement at least difficult. Their opportunities were different. And so their contexts must be carefully excavated to ensure that the same theories and issues are being discussed.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine, compare and contrast the ecclesiologies of Karl

Barth and Joseph Ratzinger. Both figures have been extremely influential within and without their respective denominations. A comparison of their thoughts on a few topics of ecclesiology will be interesting, at least. This work will also demonstrate moments of agreement that might transcend the typical debates between Protestants and Catholics.

Chapter One

Survey of Barth's Interactions with Catholicism

This chapter will summarize the interactions between Karl Barth and the Catholic theology. These include personal interactions as well as those that occurred through the pen. From his rejection of Roman Catholicism in the preface to *CD I* to his announcement that he wished that the word Protestant would be deleted from our vocabulary, it is a tumultuous history with many offences, many theological explorations, and several twists in the road. The story as it fits with this thesis best begins with the ending.

I. Barth's dialogue with Catholicism

Much of Barth's early writing career (1919-1932) can be summarized by the second edition to his *Epistle to the Romans*. In this text, Barth challenges the liberal theology which he was trained in and which had dominated Protestant theology for the past century. The tradition, founded by Friedrich Schleiermacher, had become the standard in Protestant theology. Barth's disillusionment with this school had begun during the first World War.

The German intellectuals of the day had pledged their support to Kaiser Wilhelm II, and to his policies in the dawning war. Among the intelligentsia was Barth's own former teacher Adolf von Harnack. He represented the extension of the patriotic movement to the realm of theologians who also signed this pledge, called the Agreement of the Ninety-Three. The alliance with political bodies, let alone that political body with which Barth disagreed, was distasteful to him.

His separation was developed and deepened during his pastorate in Safewil, Switzerland, 1911-1921. This position saw him ministering to the working class, engaging with people for whom the liberal theology of Schleiermacher was of no help. Mysterious and lofty was liberal theology, and Barth became disdainful of its assumptions about the possibilities of the human senses.

Barth brought this disenchantment with liberal theology to his reading of Paul's Letter to the Romans. In his commentary on this text he reflected on the otherness of God, the distance which must be traversed for man to interact with God. The distance could only be attempted by God himself. God's self-revelation is another important, perhaps the most characteristically, Barthian theme that finds its introduction in this text. Many of the topics that Barth would revisit over the next forty-five years, til the end of his life, were first discussed here.

One such topic is Barth's polemical approach to liberal theology. With the *Epistle to the Romans* he established himself as opposed to the liberal theologians who preceded him. He was not without allies in his attempt to reform Protestant theology, including Emil Brunner and Rudolf Bultmann.

After what might be considered a false start with the *Göttingen Dogmatics*, in 1924-5, Barth's first volume of the *Church Dogmatics* was published in 1932. The preface to this text is a polemic about the *analogia entis*, a theological theory finding its source in Aquinas. Barth's shocking claim that *analogia entis* is an invention of the antichrist, in the preface to *CD I/1*, can be said to inaugurate his dialogue with Catholic theology. As such, it was an inauspicious beginning, leaving much room for improvement.

Before considering the preface to *CD I*, a bit of background on what led to his claim must

be presented. Following this will be a discussion of an early attempt to apply Barthian theology to all of Christendom (and to all Christian theology). Hans Urs von Balthasar's rousing defense of Barth's work will be discussed after that. Finally, Barth's own account travelling to Rome in the days after Vatican II will be presented.

II. Barth and Przywara

In 1929, just three years prior to the publication of the first volume of *CD*, Barth invited Erich Przywara to Münster to present his work on the *analogia entis*.⁵ Przywara's presentations of his famous work on the subject apparently challenged Barth's position. He had rejected both *analogia entis* and what he considered the liberal Protestant variation, natural theology,⁶ on the grounds that man lacks the capacity to know God apart from God's intervention.

The bold stance held by Barth by the time of *CD* was gradually developed over the course of the 1920s, and most likely shaped a great deal further with Przywara's visit at the end of the decade. He is seen to have lectured, in 1925, on the “natural knowledge of God” that is imbued in every person.⁷ His lectures of 1926-7 reveal the blending of his liberal theology with his dialectical theology. He identifies the players in the dialogue. The Word of God cannot be understood as a monolithic element, existing apart from its function. He argues that “one does not speak of the Word of God unless one speaks of the human who receives it.”⁸

Statements like this reveal his opinion of human abilities at this point in his career while

⁵ Johnson, Keith L. “A Reappraisal of Karl Barth's Theological Development and his Dialogue with Catholicism.” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 14.1 (2011). 14.

⁶ Furry, Timothy J. “Analogous Analogies? Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth.” *SJT Scottish Journal of Theology* (2010). 319.

⁷ Johnson, 11.

⁸ Ibid, 12.

maintaining the primary importance of the dialect between God and man. Man's faculties are such that, for Barth in the 1920s, one could hear from God. This is only worth noting for his subsequent appraisal of the same concept. Just a few years later he expressed shock that he could have held to such an idea. His rejection of the “natural knowledge of God” is based not on a low opinion of humans, as a species. It is rather a result of his meditations on the Incarnation. The Divine breaking into the mortal universe indicates a distinction between universes so severe that they must be understood to be truly different. The notion of a human in possession of a natural knowledge of the divine is incompatible with Barth's later cosmological configuration.

Amy Marga summarizes Barth's 1929 as the year in which “questions about the unity of revelation and reconciliation in the being of God” were explored in more depth.⁹ The visit from Przywara contributed to this quest. Connected with that visit were Barth's own studies in Aquinas.

Prior to 1929, Barth had attempted enumerations of the differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. He began by arguing that both have the same starting point, and that is the shared acceptance of the reality of God.¹⁰ Grace is offered by God, but is dispensed differently according to the order of the Church. Marga describes, “[t]he sacramental nature of the Roman Catholic Church means that as an institution, it is directly related to God's grace in such a way that it possesses – and governs over – the dispensing of grace.”¹¹ This does not cohere with Barth's configuration, as he would argue that the Church “can never 'have' God the way we

⁹ Marga, Amy. *Karl Barth's Dialogue with Catholicism in Göttingen and Münster: Its Significance for His Doctrine of God*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010. 124.

¹⁰ Ibid, 125.

¹¹ Ibid.

'have' the Church."¹² The dialectic between sinner and God is, as it were, cancelled with the centralization of grace. If God's grace were available in only one physical location then the task of obtaining that grace would begin with a human walking in that direction. This would obviously not satisfy Barth because it puts God within reach.

Barth's presentation on the Church in 1927 acted as the ground on which Przywara's lectures in 1929 were based.¹³ Where Przywara presented a version of the doctrine that placed God's objectivity in the Church, Barth suggested that "Thomas Aquinas provides an even broader vision...Thomas sees it potentially in all creaturely realities,"¹⁴ indicating the ability to know about God was not in the Church only but available to all. Barth's interpretation of Aquinas is compatible, at least in his mind, with the natural theology of the Protestants that he so vigorously opposed.

The objectivity of God is the point of the search. Barth is investigating how the human senses participate in the interaction between God and man. In his reading of Aquinas, he finds an elevation of human reason and senses. Barth found this position untenable.

Perhaps it should be noted that Barth was not categorically opposed to Medieval theology. His work on Anselm demonstrates this. He is able to rationally accept Anselm's proof theory and reject Aquinas' objective view of God. While Anselm's proof theory might agree with much of Thomas' objective views of God, it is ultimately of a "revelational-theological character...not a philosophical-epistemological question."¹⁵ Of course, Aquinas never subjugated

¹² Ibid, 126.

¹³ Ibid, 127.

¹⁴ Ibid, 128.

¹⁵ Ibid, 130.

faith to reason. Rather he was adamant that the opposite was true.¹⁶ This distinction is extremely important to Barth because the whole of the human-God relationship exists in this tension.

The disagreement between Barth and Aquinas is not founded on the source of knowledge about God. They agree that faith is the source. Barth, however, maintained that humans can only know those things that are “*objects* as they are found in the creaturely world.”¹⁷ In the light of the Incarnation, this means that Christ as a person is a source of the objective knowledge of God. The Bible, also acting as an object that stands between God's world and the creaturely world in some capacity in Barth's work, is another source of knowledge about God. Revelation can reach human minds through these media. It is not the sources of knowledge about God that Barth and Aquinas disagree on, but the vessels in which the divine truth is stored. For Barth, the divine truth is accessible in revelation events, such as the Incarnation or the Holy Spirit inspiring the writing, or reading, of Scripture. For Aquinas, the divine truth is accessible in revelation events, which he categorizes in much broader terms, including human reason.

Przywara's lectures detail a major distinction in the Protestant approach to God compared to the Catholic approach. Barth would maintain the classic Calvinist doctrine of total depravity, that man's corruption can give way to faith by divine interruption. Does grace disrupt nature, or does grace complete it?¹⁸ That is the central question for Barth on the topic of God's self-revelation. It is the central question to the Catholic-Protestant divide. Protestants would hold that grace disrupts nature; Catholics that grace blends creaturely reality with God's reality to create a “complete, unified whole” in which “[g]race does not destroy nature, but perfects it and supports

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid, 131.

¹⁸ Ibid, 132-3.

it.”¹⁹

Przywara's lectures delivered at Münster apparently, or perhaps likely, sparked the discussions that led to Barth's infamous “antichrist” comment in the preface to *CD* I, 1. Despite the strong language Barth would use to describe his colleague's life's work, the visit was apparently quite peaceful in tone. Barth's reaction however was distress. As Keith Johnson notes, “Barth later described these conversations as 'overwhelming'...his encounter with Przywara and Przywara's *analogia entis* finally unveiled to Barth the errors of the line of thinking he had held since Göttingen.”²⁰

The characteristic features of Barth's theology, including the otherness of God, the necessity of understanding revelation as condescension, and the specific potency of the Incarnation as the event proclaiming all of these truths, were also present in Przywara's configuration.²¹ Rather than using the Incarnation as demonstration of the severe otherness of God, Przywara used it “instrumentally to establish an explanatory pattern for the general relationship between God and humanity.”²² In other words, he used the tools that Barth had thought would prove his position to prove something like the exact opposite.

Barth sought the distinction between his own views and Przywara's. The conversations between the two had shown Barth the conclusion he would have to reach if he continued on the path he had been travelling. Narrowing his search first on the Protestant doctrine of justification, then readings in Augustine and Luther, he found the distinction between his own and Przywara's

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Johnson, 14.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

versions of *analogia entis*.²³ “Barth locates the distinction between the two analogies in the fact that Przywara's analogy begins with an *ideal* human, the human as created, while his begins with the *actual* human, the human as sinner.”²⁴ It is not only the *ideal* in opposition to the *actual*, but the matter that truly separates them: faith.

For Barth, the human participant must be acknowledged as a sinner saved by grace. There is no other format in which man can be in relationship with God. Przywara's, he determines, is an ideal human in an abstract relationship that could never actually exist.²⁵

Barth's commitment to Anselm survives this journey, as he finds faith as the necessary starting point of theology. *Fides quaerens intellectum* was more than slogan, more than a book title to Barth. For him, this phrase indicated a position of freedom to explore the relationship between God and humans by bypassing descriptions of the general relationship between species for the specific relationship “that occurs in the person of Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and human beings.”²⁶ In other words, his theology became Christocentric.

The controversy around Barth's rejection of *analogia entis* was still discussed two decades later. Hans Urs von Balthasar noted that Barth's initial rejection of the doctrine eventually softened by the second volume of *CD*, and continued in that trajectory. By the sixth volume, Balthasar noted this passage: “If human being is a being in correspondence to its determination to be God's covenant comrade, then the statement is unavoidable that human being corresponds to God himself: to the being of the Creator.”²⁷ That certainly seems to indicate an

²³ Ibid, 14-5.

²⁴ Ibid, 15.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 16.

²⁷ Balthasar, Hans Urs Von. Trans. Edward T. Oakes, S.J. *The Theology of Karl Barth*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992. 164

acceptance of some form of creational analogy, while still maintaining the importance of the context of the dialectic between creature and Creator.

Balthasar argues that Barth never fully accepted the doctrine, and that he did not have to do so on its objective position. Rather, given the centrality of the *analogia fidei*, Barth was free to include the *analogia entis* as a periphery to *fidei*.²⁸ Barth would never believe that man could hope to communicate with God apart from revelation, yet with the faith installed in man, all things were possible. Building on Barth's work in Anselm, Balthasar convincingly carves a place for *analogia entis* within Barth's theology.

III. Karl Barth and Christian Unity

Barth's dialogue with Catholicism was at a crossroads with the publication of the first volume of *CD*. The condemnatory language of the preface had alienated him from many Catholic writers.

One book offered some hope for the continuation of the dialogue. Dr. Adolf Zeller wrote *Karl Barth and Christian Unity*²⁹, exploring the ecumenical dialogue, controversy, and hope found in Barth's early writings. Published in 1933, just one year after the first *CD*, it is a fascinating and, at times prescient, prediction of the influence Barth's work may have on the Churches of many different countries, denominations, and other elements of Church life. Even in those early days, Keller noted that “[t]here have probably never been a Protestant theology heretofore which has permitted the Roman Catholic position to influence it so profoundly, and

²⁸ Ibid, 163-6

²⁹ Is this text responsible for the term Barthianism?

which in turn has judged it so entirely free from all polemical intentions.”³⁰

Keller suggests that the controversies separating the Protestant Churches from the Catholic have “entered a new phase with the coming of Barthianism.”³¹ In the first four centuries of the conflict, Keller argues, the issues were at stake. Barth opens the possibility for a new debate. “It is differentiated from all former attempts in that it does not begin with individual points of conflict, but posits the question from an ultimate centre, from out of the innermost heart of the God-[human] relationship, and it does not endeavour to convict the opponent, nor to gain a theological or ecclesiastical advantage, but concerns itself solely with the God-[human] relationship, which includes the opponent also.”³²

Barth brings God into the ecumenical dialogue between Protestants and Catholics, according to Keller. The issues of the past, on justification, ecclesiology, and so forth were concerned with the exterior expressions. “The Barthian question” removes the denominational affiliations and directs the theologian to that basic relationship between God and man. The hope for Christian unity that this author found in Barth in the early 1930s was based on this return to the question of God, that should be put equally to Catholics and Protestants. Keller never presumes that Barth put the question to Roman Catholic theologians exactly, but only that the simplicity of it suggested a universality not seen for many years.

Keller naturally forms his dialectic around the *analogia entis* problem. He finds Barth's configuration robs God of his presence in human life, causing his to become “empty because of

³⁰ Keller, Adolf, and Manfred Manrodt. *Karl Barth and Christian Unity; the Influence of the Barthian Movement upon the Churches of the World*,. New York: Macmillan, 1933. 212

³¹ Keller, 208.

³² Ibid, 208-9.

all the abstractness and hiddenness.”³³ He also finds the world of man, in Barth's system, to be without approval, and perhaps even lacking in any connection to God's work of redemption.³⁴ The criticism goes so far to say that “the Barthian relationship to God is continually threatened either by pantheism or by theopanism.”³⁵ Keller's sympathies lie with Przywara's *analogia entis*.

Keller's book offers praise to Barth for putting the Reformation concerns not only to the Catholic Church but also to the Protestant Churches of his day.³⁶ This style of equal opportunity criticism actually strips it of its “polemical character and become[s] a call to repentance to every church which claims to be anything else than a church of pardoned sinners.”³⁷

Keller wrote at a time before Barth fully inhabited his role; prior to some of the events which came to be defining. Nevertheless, he offers a fascinating contemporary report on the ecumenical hope present in Barth's work. This hope is mostly due to Keller's interpretations, as he even admits that any actual dialogue between Barth and the Roman Catholic Church was unlikely, given his caustic review of *analogia entis* and *Imago Dei* as impossible readings of the human/divine relationship. He closes by correcting the assertion that “Barthianism was a way toward Rome.”³⁸

IV. Hans Urs von Balthasar

Hans Urs von Balthasar published his *The Theology of Karl Barth* in 1951, adding a new and much-needed positive voice to the dialogue between Barth and Catholicism. Balthasar

³³ Ibid, 215.

³⁴ Ibid, 216.

³⁵ Ibid, 217.

³⁶ Ibid, 223.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, 224.

described the Protestant-Catholic divide as a “puzzling crack” or “enigmatic cleft.”³⁹ His approach to ecumenism was to delve deeply into his own tradition, not diminishing the differences between denominations, but enhancing them so that nothing of value would be lost if dialogue proved fruitful.

Prior to this book, Balthasar and Barth engaged in dialogue on the subject of the Eucharist. Barth attempted to draw his Protestant followers to admitting a real presence during the service and re-evaluating the Catholic terms *fieri* and *nova forma* in light of Reformed Christocentric preaching.⁴⁰

The two met in 1940.⁴¹ Barth's lectures on the Council of Trent added to the dialogue. Though they disagreed on the matter of the “sacramental-moral theology” of Trent, the two did agree that the “decrees of Trent had to be interpreted against the backdrop of the fullness of the Catholic sacramental life.”⁴² A bridge had been built across Trent. These lectures inspired Balthasar's book on Barth.

This wide-ranging work attempts to tackle several of the most challenging aspects of Barth's work, including Barth's position within Protestantism and possible links with Barth's work in the development of Catholic theology. In recent years, Balthasar's once definitive interpretation of Barth has fallen out of favour.⁴³ Regardless of recent reviews, Balthasar's work was very influential in his time and it built a bridge that allowed many subsequent Catholic theologians to walk to Barth since. Its contemporary importance is also attested by Barth's own interactions with Balthasar.

³⁹ Long, D. Stephen. *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*. Fortress, 2014. 239.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 240-1.

⁴¹ Ibid, 243.

⁴² Ibid, 247.

⁴³ Ibid, 1.

Though Balthasar's book was completed four years prior to the section of *CD* about which this thesis is concerned⁴⁴ he nevertheless provides helpful commentary on Barth's shifting ecclesiological values. He anticipates the growing role that the Holy Spirit will come to play in Barth's ecclesiology when he commented, “when ecclesiology becomes a function of Christology (as it does in the *Church Dogmatics*), and if Christology includes within itself all the elements of the created order (nature, continuity, the human condition), then we will have to admit that Barth's earlier ecclesiology from 1920 to 1930 is now outmoded.”⁴⁵

What Balthasar is reporting on is the tendency present in Barth's early works to push all mention of man's actions to the extreme of natural theology, which he thoroughly rejected and dismantled. Balthasar goes on to recommend that “Barth should now construct a consistent ecclesiology that contains and reflects the results of his christocentric theological anthropology.”⁴⁶

Balthasar seems to agree with Barth when he said, “The Church as the Body of Christ has always owed her generation to the vertical event of the grace of Incarnation.”⁴⁷ The uniqueness of the Incarnation as revelation and source for the human-God relationship is central to Barth's thought.

Possibly thanks to Balthasar, the dialogue between Catholics and Barth rose in the 1950s. Hans Küng's doctoral dissertation was nearly rejected at the proposal phase, but was saved by a letter of recommendation from none other than Barth himself. Küng's *La Doctrine de Karl Barth et Une Réflexion Catholique* was published in 1957. In this work Küng argues that Barth's

⁴⁴ *CD* IV, 2 was first published in 1955; Balthasar's book on Barth was published in 1951.

⁴⁵ Balthasar, 386.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 388.

configuration of justification is not at odds with Roman Catholic teaching, despite the topic being the source of the Protestant-Catholic divide.

Balthasar reported that Barth's theology provided “the most thorough and penetrating display of the Protestant view and the closest rapprochement with the Catholic.”⁴⁸ The value of this dialogue was in both parties' insistence that each remain firmly within his own tradition, exploring fully the richness of each. Out of that pursuit, reconciliation is possible.

V. Barth at Vatican II

By 1965, Karl Barth was nearing his eightieth birthday and still voraciously pursuing two major works. The first, his life's work: the famously dense *Church Dogmatics*, whose fourth (and planned as the penultimate) volume would go unfinished. The second, the work of his life: his autobiography, which would also go unfinished. His work was interrupted in this year due to health problems, which seem to strike theologians as they near completion of their major works. It was during the increasingly common event of a stay in the hospital that Barth received a fascinating letter from Rome.

In Rome, the Church event of the century, Vatican II, was nearing completion. The movement towards reconciliation with the modern world forced the Catholic Church to address its inconsistencies, wherever they may be. So the Church began this Council in an attempt to reunify with the world at large and the world of other Christians, which had changed dramatically in the century since the last Council. In that mission the Church admitted the need for reunifying with its separated brethren, including the various Eastern Orthodox and Protestant

⁴⁸ Ibid. 23.

Churches that had been established in the last thousand years.

Vatican II was different. Pope John XXIII created the Secretariat for Christian Unity himself. The days of papal passiveness towards ecumenical movements had ended. Despite some resistance to the ecumenical approach to this council, Pope John prevailed. As the pope who famously said, “We were all made in God's image, and thus, we are all Godly alike,”⁴⁹ does not seem likely to back down from his mission of peace and unity.⁵⁰ Even decades later he is considered, by Walter Kasper, “the spiritual father of the Decree on Ecumenism.”⁵¹ Pope John died prior to the conclusion of the council, but his work was nonetheless carried on.⁵²

“Vatican II wished to be a Council not of excommunication but of union and communion; not of delimitation but of integration.”⁵³ These values may be best expressed in the formation and task of the Secretariat for Christian Unity.

The Secretariat was responsible for the document on ecumenism, as well as others including documents concerning Catholic relations with non-Christian religions and religious liberties. This was the first organization to be officially engaged with ecumenical concerns. Its original purpose was to invite non-Catholic witnesses, among whom was Karl Barth. The letter he received while in hospital in 1965 was an invitation to witness the final two sessions of Vatican II.

While the non-Catholic representatives were not invited to participate, their presence announced the high value that was being placed on reunification of the world's Christians. By the

⁴⁹ "Canonisation of Blessed John Paul II and Blessed John XXIII." The National Catholic Church. July 5, 2013.

⁵⁰ His final work, the encyclical *Pacem Terris*, further indicates where his priorities lay.

⁵¹ Kasper, Walter. *The Decree on Ecumenism – Read Anew After 40 Years*. November 11, 2004.

⁵² Pope Paul VI, his successor, declared him a Servant of God, immediately commencing the process for John's sainthood.

⁵³ Gérard Siegwalt, “Vatican II Between Catholicism and Catholicity,” in *Vatican II*, ed. Silvia Scatena et al. (SCM Press, 2012), 68.

end of the fourth and final session, nearly one hundred non-Catholic observers had been present.

As stated above, Barth's health prevented his attendance. This missed opportunity resulted in a personal visit to Rome the year after the council ended. Though he was absent from the proceedings, he may have gained more from his replacement visit than he would have had he been able to accept the original invitation. The little book that he wrote chronicling this journey, *Ad Limina Apostolorum*, reads like a who's who of modern Catholic theology. His visit was guided by Bishop Willebrands, the representative of Cardinal Bea in the Secretariat for Christian Unity, by “the thoroughly Swiss”⁵⁴ Father Magnus Löhrer from Einsiedeln, and Monsignor Salzmann. His guided tour also permitted conversations with Karl Rahner, Joseph Ratzinger⁵⁵, and Otto Semmelroth.

For an hour, Barth even met with Pope Paul VI, who cracked a joke about the unwieldy length of *Church Dogmatics*. The historical significance cannot be understated. Here was Karl Barth, successor to the Reformed tradition, opponent of Aquinas and student of John Calvin, at the Threshold of the Apostles.

Barth was probably the most influential Protestant theologian of the day. Here he was in Rome, in the days after Vatican II, discussing his concerns with, among other notable theologians, one current pope and one future pope. It is a tantalizing scene. When one knows how rich and full these discussions must have been, a question arises. This notoriously long-winded author just met with some of the highest regarded theologians of 20th century Catholicism and his record of it is less than one hundred pages. The disappointment at the book's

⁵⁴ Barth, *Ad Limina Apostolorum*. 11.

⁵⁵ Obviously later known as Pope Benedict XVI, but also a former professor at Bonn, where Barth taught for many years and where he famously presented his *Dogmatics in Outline* among the ruins of the University immediately after the War.

brevity just becomes heavier as he reveals some of the topics of his conversations: Christ's presence in the Eucharist with Rahner, Mariology with Ratzinger and others.

An earlier version of this thesis attempted to reconstruct their conversation. The reports of the talk were too scant and Barth's writings on Mariology lacked the thoroughness with which Ratzinger has written on the doctrine, so that concept was abandoned for the time being. It is worth revisiting, but only a brief investigation into this topic, as it relates to *Lumen Gentium*, is featured in part three of chapter three of this thesis. The fact of their conversation was more important to the development of this thesis than the content.

Barth's little book contains three essays, one letter, and nine sections of questions about the council. Sadly, for theology students, because Barth "assured the Secretariat for Unity of my strict discretion, the reader will find here nothing of the answers (sometimes, lack of answers) which my questions received in Rome,"⁵⁶ the book is a one-sided conversation. It is perhaps enough consolation for the ecumenically minded Christian to know that the dialogue continued, even if beyond their hearing. Barth's questions do offer insights into the viability of the Catholic scheme of Christian unity, as well as the Protestant reservations.

Barth's reaction to Vatican II is softly critical. His second question is perhaps the central question which Protestants might ask of the Council before joining with their ecumenical program: "Was Vatican II a reforming council?"⁵⁷ The Protestant Reformation was an attempt at a *reformation*, after all. Barth's question is as much about 1966, when he asked it, as it is about 1517, when Luther nailed his *Nintey-Five Theses* to the Wittenberg Castle's door. The future of ecumenism must acknowledge the pains of the past. The scars of the Rome/Protestant schism

⁵⁶ Barth, *Ad Limina Apostolorum*. 18.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 20.

have been inflicted by both sides.

Barth's questions ("Was Vatican II a reforming council?") cut right to the matter. His response could be believably rephrased as, "Must we protest any longer?" In five hundred years the first few steps away from Catholicism have widened into a gap. But if the original wounds are healing, perhaps those Christians in Rome and Wittenberg may yet have a future together.

Barth wrote, "I would be happy to see the words 'Protestant' and 'Protestantism' disappear from our vocabulary."⁵⁸ He is hinting at unity across pan-denominational lines. Protestants may never sit under the Pope again, but unity that permits differences is certainly possible. If those essentials could be agreed on, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Churches may enjoy a new form of unity that allows for difference of expression. Barth's visit to Rome occurred less than two years before his death. It was the culmination of a lifetime of Protestant-Catholic dialogue.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 17.

Chapter Two

The True Church

The next four chapters of this thesis will follow the four chapters of this section of *Church Dogmatics*. These chapters build to Barth's conclusion in the final chapter, "The Order of the Community." To understand the position he will take within the context of his work, these chapters discussing his views of other fundamental ecclesiological concepts will be dealt with. Though the dialogue with Ratzinger is centred on the issues in the last chapter, responses based on his writings will be presented throughout. Getting to the point is as important to Barth as expressing the point itself.

The very title 'true Church' indicates a judgment. The Protestant and Catholic positions on what qualifies as a true Church, or what perhaps *the* true Church is, have been based on various criteria. By what creed, model, history, or location can a group of humans profess, follow, claim, or mark on a map that could qualify theirs as the true Church?

John Calvin suggests the preaching of the Scripture,⁵⁹ physically represented and sealed by the administering of the sacraments,⁶⁰ as the one sure mark of a true Church. Barth does not share Calvin's goal here of providing instructions to condemn individual Churches. Rather, he is interested in the ontology of the Church. Its inception and growth are his concerns. The true Church cannot be identified as a single body on earth. A given Christian community cannot be qualified as a true Church, or its members as members of the true Church by criteria so simple as faithful administration of the sacraments, adherence to biblical principles, or an iron-clad

⁵⁹ Calvin, John. Trans. Robert White. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 730.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 561-2.

statement of faith. These are all important factors to the life of a Church, but they are not proof of a community's *trueness*. Barth insists on one criterion: “The Christian community, the true Church, arises and is only as the Holy Spirit works.”⁶¹ He is not offering a rubric to judge communities by, but an ontological description of the true Church.

The Church is the work of the Holy Spirit. While the work of the church is by men, it is by men affected by “the quickening power of His spirit,”⁶² for the purpose of sanctifying individual Christians and their work. This is how “Jesus Christ builds up Christianity within the world;” subordinating human action to “the divine inauguration, control and support of the human action which takes place among Christians.”⁶³

Barth’s emphasis on the divine source of the Church’s authority cannot be understated. If not divinely approved, even the good work of men in the Church proves detrimental to that body’s qualification as a true Church. Indeed, for such a body, it “is quite impossible” to be considered a true Church “in its own strength.”⁶⁴ An individual community can be comprised of people who practice the sacraments, affirm the creeds, and have the name of Jesus on their lips and still fail to qualify as a true Church. “Its institutions and traditions and even its reformations are no guarantee as such that it is the true Church,” rather, “it can be only the semblance of a Church.”⁶⁵

The true Church God “makes use of the human and sinful action.”⁶⁶ It is by the quickening of the Holy Spirit that any Church might be qualified as the true Church. All require

⁶¹ Barth. *CD* IV, 2. 617.

⁶² Ibid. 616.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 618.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

the actions of men, and thereby all are burdened with the sinful actions of men. It is not simply the sanctification of the individual humans within the Church that qualify it as a true Church. It is the message which these people announce, and the message which these people live. The true Church is made of sanctified sinners but it is only the true Church “as it points beyond itself...attesting the divine work of sanctification, the upbuilding of the community by the Holy Spirit, by which it is inaugurated and determined and characterized.”⁶⁷

The true Church will be explored further in four sections. Each section will discuss Barth's configuration and present arguments from the work of Joseph Ratzinger. (1) It is marked by the establishment of God, (2) the sanctification of sinful humans, and (3) the continual proclamation of the message that all of humanity will live like the Church is living now. (4) The Church is built up by the inclusion of new members to the community.

I. Established by God

1. The Holy Spirit's Work

Who does the work of the Church? This is Barth's first question and it is not easily answered. Much of Barth's theology is about this tension between God's actions and man's. The question asks which actor does which tasks for the Church. In answering he quickly switches to ask which actor acted first. Obviously, God precedes man, but in the salvation story did God respond to man's distress or did man respond to God's grace? These are the perennial questions of the field and they are put here just as well. Addressing the tension in agency between the humans and God within the Church draws him back to this brief acknowledgement of the tension present in the theology of justification. The terms change however, as the Church is comprised of

⁶⁷ Ibid. 617.

believing Christians, who have more liberty than the human that is without Christ. That is, Barth is not asking if unregenerate humans have the capacity to reach God. His answer to that question was decided many years earlier. Here, he is asking, Do Christians have the capacity to act first, or must they too await God's beckoning?

God grants Christians the ability to act in his service. Individuals can act, and can decide to act, but it is God that planted that quality within them. "He does not act directly – without this people. He gives to this people the necessary qualities. He thus makes possible the impossible – that this race of men, just as it is, acquires and has the freedom to be able to serve Him."⁶⁸ The human race is unfit, but is continually fitted. This is the paradox of the building of the Church. The human race, comprised entirely of sinners, is nevertheless fitted "in and with its human thought and word and will and work to make this provisional representation."⁶⁹ The fitness of humanity to this task will be discussed in more detail later. It is important here to briefly develop the answer to the question posed at the start of this section.

Unsurprisingly, the Church is, for Ratzinger, very much a work of God as well. Originally, creatively, and ultimately it is God acting that founds and supports the Church. But Ratzinger is extremely sensitive to the presence of humans in this structure and, like Barth, takes some pains in his attempts to adequately express the peculiar union of finite human with infinite God.

The human responsibility within the Church is difficult to determine in Barth. There is a sense of freedom to act in service and in worship, which constitutes much of Church life. But this is always in some communion with God, so the human action is not exactly the result of

⁶⁸ Ibid. 623.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 623.

their industry, yet also not on the basis of their passivity.

The three stages of development of the Church, which are not easily separated and which overlap, find the work mostly the responsibility of the Holy Spirit. *The founding of the Church*, supposedly in each generation, is the task of the Holy Spirit. *The completing of the Church*, an event still to come, will be the responsibility of Jesus Christ, perhaps in concert with the Holy Spirit. *The goal of the Church*, the sanctification of its members is also the work of the Church. In this, the human participants cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

Ratzinger recommends “to view the inside and the outside of the Church together as a unity again.”⁷⁰ He is suggesting that a definition for the Church be based on the Church itself, in its present form. He is, of course, among the finest of Church historians, so what he is suggesting here not dramatically differ from Barth. He insists that a definition for the Church should be based on the Church itself. Barth was obviously not negligent of the external, contemporary nature of the Church, but his work in *CD IV*, 2 is decidedly esoteric compared to the quote from Ratzinger above, which is representative of the latter's approach. This will come into focus later. Ratzinger's approach emphasizes the questions of who the Church is for and by whom the Church exists? While he certainly affirms it is God's Church, his emphasis on the physical nature of the community differs from Barth's more spiritual definition.

“In the strict and primary and ultimate sense it is God Himself and He alone” that does the building.⁷¹ God is the qualified entity to provide the needed power, provision, and grace in the building of the Church. Mysteriorly, the actions of his body are the actions of his community, which is at once a concept that ascribes mission and submission as qualities of the

⁷⁰ Heim. 235.

⁷¹ Barth. *CD IV*, 2. 632.

Church.⁷² They are responsible for the health of the Church and they are passive in its maintenance. Begin empowered by God, who acts first, this community “builds itself.”⁷³

Barth is explicit that the Church “arises and is only as the Holy Spirit works.”⁷⁴ The human input into this is in their work and their acceptance of the sanctifying work of the Spirit. These sanctified people are built up, along with their sanctified works, into the true Church.⁷⁵ The setting for this activity is “in the time between the resurrection and the return of Jesus Christ.”⁷⁶ Barth is extremely careful to isolate this period as unique in all of history. This is the time for the building of the Church, it is “the time of the community,” and it is the time of Christianity, which will expire at the return of Christ. There will be no need for the Church, for the communal gathering of Christians, and there will be no need for Christianity itself. As Christ's witness will be obvious and universally known to all.

The building up of the Church occurs in this period between the Resurrection and the return of Christ. It is by the “quickening power” of the Holy Spirit that the work is begun.⁷⁷ Man's work in the building of the Church is by the “divine inauguration, control and support” of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁸

A true Church, as Barth would have it, is one that is quickened and guided by the Holy Spirit as a specific person of the trinity.⁷⁹ Creeds, traditions, and history cannot save such a community from being only “the semblance of a Church.”⁸⁰ It is not the failure of humans

⁷² Ibid. 634.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 617.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 616.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 618.

necessarily that prevent communities from losing their status as 'true.' The cause of these failures is not mentioned beyond the absence of the Holy Spirit. Its departure is perhaps fittingly left a mystery by Barth.

Sensitive to changes in view brought on by Vatican II, Ratzinger argued that the Church “is not a club, not a party, not even a sort of religious state within the secular state, but a body – Christ's Body.”⁸¹ He is careful to explain that the Church is unlike any community. Its claimed source is in the supernatural events surrounding Jesus and his followers. But he is not arguing for this. In his definition of the Church, Ratzinger aims to reveal its essence. At its core, in its essence, the Church is Christ's Body. This profoundly mystical, and mysteriously continuous view of the Church, is rooted in Augustine. With the Church Fathers, Augustine was careful to express the mystical nature of the Church as an event that is firmly existing in the physical reality of the world. The mysticism and the sacramentalism of the Church were not merely related, they “are synonymous.”⁸² The physical act of the Eucharistic celebration is the portal, as it were, to the spiritual life with God. It is the centrepiece of Catholic theology, ecclesiology, and of course, Ratzinger's work in these fields as well.

He wrote, “The Church is built up from the eucharistic meal, and conversely the whole purpose of the Eucharist is to gather people into the Body of the Lord and thus into the Spirit of the Lord, so as to transform them into the living Body of Christ, the place of the concrete and mighty presence of Christ in the world.”⁸³ The source of the physical Church is Christ's Body and the goal of the spiritual Church is communion with God through Christ's Body. It is an astounding piece of theological poetry that claims that man is welcomed to God by God's

⁸¹ Heim. 268.

⁸² Ibid. 270.

⁸³ Ibid. 271.

becoming man. The importance of the Eucharist to Ratzinger's ecclesiology is a theme that will be visited several more times throughout this thesis.

Ratzinger continued, “And this is why the Church is not of our making but is constructed by the Lord himself when he cleanses us by Word and sacrament and thus makes us his members.”⁸⁴ His global view of Church is apparent here. He mentions three items that will be discussed more in this chapter: the cleansing that comes from the Lord to the members of his Church, the importance of sacrament to Ratzinger's ecclesiology (especially as compared with Barth's insistence on the provisional nature of the Church), and the human participants being made “his members,” which is an allusion to sanctification and to integration.

True Churches can be plagued by human participants who appear ill fit to the task. He warns that the Holy Spirit's presence, as long as it is sanctifying the people and their actions, can work “in spite of the sinfulness of the human action of Christians”⁸⁵ to create a true Church, which again suggests a divine appointment, or dis-appointment, for communities that have failed to function as true Churches.

2. The Church as Provisional Community

Barth's ecclesiology may be summarized in his description of the Church as a provisional community. To explore his ecclesiology to any depth it is necessary to use the concept of the Church as provisional community as an entry point.

The Christian Church is not the final configuration of God's people. When this final configuration is achieved, the Church will no longer exist. The *ecclesia* exists now as a body of

⁸⁴ Ibid. 268.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

people belonging to Christ, its members sourced in the larger body of existing humans. Those that do not believe are excluded from this gathering. In the final configuration of created order, all of humanity will be under God's direct governance, assured of his sovereignty. There will be no need to isolate God's people from all people as all people will be God's people. There exists now this collection of God's people, tasked with proclaiming his message of reconciliation and the ultimate sanctification of humanity. So the Christian Church is a provisional community, which exists only for a time and for a mission and which represents the hope of the *eschaton*.

The Church exists now, between its divine founding and its divine completion, as a representation of the day to come in which all humans will be sanctified. The Church does not announce to the rest of humanity its own existence, but it functions as a herald of the message of the future life of the species. Its objective (that is, when it is operating as a 'true Church'), is the announcement of the eventual reconciliation of the world to Christ. The *ecclesia* can only exist “as it points beyond itself.”⁸⁶ When the Church neglects this mission, it may not be operating as a 'true Church,' according to Barth's criteria. He warns that the primary sin of a Church is to forget its placement in terms of mission, temporality, and status before God and men. He writes, “the characteristic sin by which the Church seems always to be threatened and into which it seems always to be on the point of falling: that of trying to represent itself rather than the sanctification which has taken place in Jesus Christ; of trying to forget that its existence is provisional.”⁸⁷

Ratzinger would certainly agree that the Church is verified by its trajectory, in apparent harmony with Barth's provisional model. He wrote, “the Church's essence is found, not in the

⁸⁶ CD IV, 2. 623.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 622-3.

Church herself, but rather in her orientation and her referring to One beyond herself.”⁸⁸ Ratzinger is concerned with the mission or purpose of the Church only tangentially. For him, the essence of the Church is the most important question. Its essence is found in its orientation. This does not mean that he agrees with Barth's specific configuration of the provisional community. On this, Ratzinger and Barth agree that the Church has its identity outside itself.

The Church points to Christ in both of their explanations. For Barth, the Church points to Christ by way of his reconciliation with the rest of creation. For Ratzinger, the Church points to Christ by way of his presence in the eucharistic celebration. The essence of the community is in that sacramental event. The event orients the community to a position of expectation. In this sense, the Church is an eschatological community at its most basic level. It is a group based on anticipating Christ, recalling his presence, and enjoying some form of his presence in the form of sacraments.

Though he never deals with Barth's provisional community exactly, Ratzinger's sacramental and eschatological ecclesiology is open for Barth's configuration to exist in the same space. The Eucharist is mentioned here not because Ratzinger's descriptions of it are entirely consistent with Barth's or because it is at all equal to Barth's concept of the Church as provisional community. Ratzinger's eucharistic theology is the ground on which he determines the ontological definition of the Church. It is, in its essence, Christ's Body and the Eucharist is the event which affirms this. It is the event, within his own tradition, that speaks directly to Barth's work concerning the eschatological orientation of the community.

Ratzinger's emphatic insistence that the Eucharist is the locus of Church life puts him almost in agreement with Barth's configuration of the Church as provisional community. These

⁸⁸ Heim. 1-2.

are not identical concepts, but they each grant the Church an eschatological orientation. Rather than describe this period as the time of the provisional community, Ratzinger describes the setting of the Eucharist as the pilgrim Church. At the centre of the pilgrim journey is the Eucharist, “not a reward for its [the Church's] holiness but a help for its time of pilgrimage.”⁸⁹ This sense of pilgrimage, which will be revisited, offers some ground on which Barth's provisional community might accord with Ratzinger's Eucharistic ecclesiology.

II. Sanctification

After establishing his views of the Church as a body based on and enlivened by the Holy Spirit, Barth raises the question of the qualification of the human participants. The project is founded and completed by the Holy Spirit. The human work, of participating in their own sanctification, and their ability to successfully achieve this task is the focus of this next section.

Is the community fit for the task? The task is no small thing. All of humanity must hear this message. The Church itself, as the *de facto* representation of what is to come to all humanity, is not simply the holder of the message but the message itself. It “is a true and effective, genuine and invincible representation of the elevation and establishment of all men as it has been fulfilled in the exaltation of the man Jesus, and therefore of the divine work of sanctification in its totality.”⁹⁰ This is what the Church is. The obvious question arises: “Is the people assembled in this community – a race of men and not of angels – fitted for this necessary...event?”⁹¹

The problems are evident. The Scripture adequately lists the unsavoury traits of humans that would seem to bar them from participation in this work. What crimes are left unreported in

⁸⁹ Ratzinger. *The Mystery of the Eucharist*. 357.

⁹⁰ *CD IV*, 2. 622.

⁹¹ *Ibid*.

Scripture are found in the history of the Church. The human problem on which Barth meditates is perhaps the central problem of any Church: “that of trying to represent itself rather than the sanctification which has taken place in Jesus Christ.”⁹² The sins of the Church are damning enough that the sins of humanity need not even be mentioned. However it is the Church that elevates itself, rather than reveals the elevation of humanity, that is failing.

Is the human race capable of performing this task? “No, this people is never fitted of itself to make the representation which is the meaning and purpose of its existence.”⁹³ The program is not abandoned but rather powered from an alternate source. The power that first made them members of the Church is the same power which sustains them in their mission. “Jesus the Lord...is the One who acts.”⁹⁴ It is Jesus that acts through his Church and empowers them on their mission. “He gives to this people the necessary qualities.”⁹⁵

Ratzinger generally agrees with Barth on this. He worries that the divisions in the Body, caused by the failures of humans, might deter people from the Church.⁹⁶ But he maintains that “[t]he Church is not called 'holy'...because its members, collectively and individually, are holy, sinless men,” rather, “the holiness of the Church consists in that power of sanctification which God exerts in it in spite of human sinfulness.”⁹⁷ That is nearly an identical sentiment to Barth's earlier statement that the Church can function “in spite of the sinfulness of the human action of Christians”⁹⁸

This granting of power to the Church by Jesus creates an event. Where the Church is, the

⁹² Ibid. 623.

⁹³ Ibid. 623.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 623.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ratzinger. *Introduction to Christianity*. 262-3.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 263.

⁹⁸ CD IV, 2. 618.

power of Jesus is pouring out. So where the Church is, there is a supernatural/natural, phenomenal event. The Church is given this power continually. There is a moment in time in which the Church receives God's leading, "in which God continually sets this people on the way and in movement, continually indicating both the goal and the direction towards it."⁹⁹ What is being described here almost transcends normal time-space parameters. There is not a one-time interaction, nor is there a regular interaction, for instance, once a week. The interaction is continual. In Barth's configuration, the Church is being elevated to participate in the continual interaction between the members of the Trinity. Continuous contact with God, continuous interaction. It is an event that never ceases; a constant present. The work of the community is not to connect with God on the basis of their action. Rather, "it must be a human response of faithfulness to the faithfulness of God"¹⁰⁰ that the community cites in their interactions with God. This description is in keeping with Barth's central conceit in his descriptions of humanity: that the figure of Jesus Christ is the channel through which all of humanity is described.

Ratzinger describes baptism as the outward sign of the Christian's forgiveness. However, "even the baptized Christian needs forgiveness,"¹⁰¹ which is not achieved by further baptisms but by penance. The Christian is not fit for the task of the Church, but they are made fit, and made holy, by the continued exercise of repentance, penance, and forgiveness.

Despite the human propensity to sin, the Church is maintained by Christ himself as "the Lord himself...cleanses us by Word and sacrament and thus makes us his members."¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Molnar. *Karl Barth and the Lord's Supper*. 157.

¹⁰¹ Ratzinger. *Introduction to Christianity*. 258.

¹⁰² Heim. 268.

III. Proclamation of Message

1. What is the Message?

As stated above, “the theme and content of the witness with which His community is charged...Christianity, or Christendom, is the holy community of the intervening period.”¹⁰³ That is, the community which transmits the message is the message itself.

Barth goes on further, “the congregation or people which knows this elevation and establishment, this sanctification, not merely *de iure* but already *de facto*, and which is therefore a witness to all others, representing the sanctification which has already come upon them too in Jesus Christ. Their representation is provisional. It is provisional because it has not yet achieved it, nor will it do so. It can only attest to it in the puzzling form of a reflection.”¹⁰⁴ The community is preaching the sanctification of all of humanity, a state that can be observed within the community in the present age.

The message of the Church is not only the promise that God offers to humanity. The message is the announcement of Christ and it is an introduction to the person of Christ. The Church's task is to continue Christ's work of announcing Christ to the world. According to Ratzinger, Christ “is the central and decisive point of all human history.”¹⁰⁵

The message is to encourage faith in him, which offers “meaningfulness of being.”¹⁰⁶ This meaningfulness is gained by the 'hominization' process, wherein the human is fully developed. It is the last stage of human development and it brings completion to the growth of individual

¹⁰³ CD IV, 2. 620.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ratzinger. *Introduction to Christianity*. 141.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

humans.¹⁰⁷ This 'hominization' is possible through Christ and is the fullness of the sanctified individual. As the exemplary man, the first and the exalted one to achieve this fullness, the message that Jesus and the Church present is the person Jesus. "The sign Jesus offers is himself."¹⁰⁸ The implication of Paul's description of Jesus as the Last Adam is "that he is intended to gather the whole creature 'Adam' to himself."¹⁰⁹ The message is for all of humanity and there is a strong suggestion of sanctification for the species.

The Church stands now as the image of the future for humanity. In a description that is strikingly similar to Barth's words, Ratzinger writes, "the future man reveals himself in this age in *the* last men."¹¹⁰

2. Is the Church Necessary?

The Church is not an end in itself, nor is it a means to an end. "The existence of the true Church is not an end in itself."¹¹¹ The true Church is also "savingly necessary."¹¹² Barth holds these seemingly contradictory values next to each other and supports both. The continuity between these two is in understanding the Church as a provisional community.

The goal of the true Church is to indicate the direction of humanity. Barth is careful to put the responsibility of saving humanity on God and not on the Church: "The goal in the direction of which the true Church proceeds and moves is the revelation of the sanctification of all humanity and human life."¹¹³ The Church moves along in a particular direction, towards the goal,

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 175-6.

¹⁰⁸ Ratzinger. *Eschatology*. 29.

¹⁰⁹ Ratzinger. *Introduction to Christianity*. 176.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 182.

¹¹¹ *CD* IV, 2. 620.

¹¹² Ibid. 621.

¹¹³ Ibid. 620.

but not necessarily *to* the goal. The goal is the revelation of the gospel: “the sanctification of all humanity and human life as it has already taken place *de iure*.” The sanctification of the human race is not a matter for individual humans to refuse. It is a *right*, a *fact*. The Church is the signal that the species is going in this direction.

The Church moves in this direction, announcing that the species is moving in this direction, because that is their mission. In fact, the Church's mission is the transmission of that message whose “theme and content” is the very mission of the Church.¹¹⁴ This holy community exists for this purpose. It is “savingly necessarily” because the message is such. It is “not an end in itself” because it points to some specific future state. The Church must happen now and it must end at some point. It is provisional.

The Church, for Ratzinger, is “the centre of the Spirit's activity in the world.”¹¹⁵ It is “the continuation of God's deliberate plunge into human wretchedness.”¹¹⁶ The Church is the place of God's working on the earth, among humanity. It is the means by which his message is delivered to the unbelievers. The people of the Church cooperate with God “to serve for the salvation of the whole world.”¹¹⁷ As the home of the gift of the sacraments, the Church is necessary for this phase of history.¹¹⁸

IV. Building up means integration

In the metaphor of the construction of the Church, humans serve as both the craftsmen and as the materials. Barth advises against describing them as materials and prefers the term

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ratzinger. *Introduction to Christianity*. 259.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 265.

¹¹⁷ Ratzinger. *The Mystery of the Eucharist*. 353.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 356-8.

elements. He reasons that each has

his own original and spontaneous life; each different from all the rest; each having his own place and nature, so that he cannot be easily fused with or exchanged for others; each in his freedom, with his own thoughts and speech and attitudes and acts; each on his own life's journey and with his own life's work; each with his own direct and unconditional responsibility.¹¹⁹

The individual is characterized by factors entirely unique and peculiar to him/her. There are no two alike and so there are none that might be described as materials. These humans are elements, each completely original.

The final configuration of this building is unknown, as God is the architect and his plans are revealed only when action is needed.¹²⁰ One of the known, and constant, goals is the integration of the members into one another. As long as there are new humans created, this work is never complete. The workers are never allowed to rest either, as workers on a real building might complete their task and so retire from the project. In the work of the Church, “there is no such thing as a finished task.”¹²¹

The action of the upbuilding is the integration of the members. The Church is oriented toward the final sanctification of all humanity and is announcing this same thing. More members are not only anticipated, but desired. The growth of the Church is the work of the Church and it is the message of the Church. The new members are integrated into the metaphorical building. “Building up means integration.”¹²² The integration of each new member into the complex structure is the work of the Church. The growing of the Church is both horizontal, adding more members, and it is vertical, growing each member in sanctification. It also internal, as each new

¹¹⁹ *CD* IV, 2. 630-1.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 631.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.* 635.

member is related in a new way to each existing member.

The product is never finished. There is a strange generational aspect that Barth mentions, arguing that “[e]very step forward includes a repetition of those already taken and those which have still to follow. All further building must be a fresh building from the very first, from the foundation upwards.”¹²³

Ratzinger's involvement with Vatican II put his career on a trajectory that ensures his visitations upon its documents, particularly *Lumen Gentium*, would be frequent. One of that document's statements describes the Church itself as a sacrament. More precisely, the Church is described as a *veluti sacramentum*, a partial sacrament. Ratzinger approved of this designation, commenting, “the Church is, in Christ, a sacrament, as it were, a sign and instrument of the most intimate union with God as well as the unity of all mankind.”¹²⁴

Ratzinger views the Christian as being translated into something else, leaving their old life behind. The Christian is joined with other believers in the practice of the Eucharist. This includes the Christians present, the Christians already dead, and the Christians to come. But there is another dimension of communing with God. He describes this as the central mystery, in which Christians are introduced “into the dynamic circle of trinitarian love that not only unites subject but even brings individual subjects together without depriving them of their individuality.”¹²⁵ This stirring union with disparate elements hearkens to Barth's descriptions of the integration of individual Christians. The way to integration among Christians is to unite each with Christ.

¹²³ Ibid. 631.

¹²⁴ Heim. 234.

¹²⁵ Ibid. 149.

“Now the way to this unity with Christ is the Eucharist,”¹²⁶ and the continual acceptance of it will bond Christian with Christ and, under the headship of Christ, it will bond Christian with Christian.¹²⁷

Ratzinger goes further, emphasizing the community as preceding personal faith. Barth's work on integration never quite takes the step to cite the physical Church as the home for individual believers. His eschatology is self-focused, leading to an existentialist reading which de-emphasizes the physical aspects of the Church.

Citing Augustine, Ratzinger argues that “[a]ccepting the whole community of believers is, indeed, part of being a Christian, the humility (*humilitas*) if love (*caritas*), the 'bearing with one another'”¹²⁸ are the ways that Christians live in community with one another. This is the work of the humans involved and it is a supernatural gift from God that allows them to succeed. From their own effort there is some success and from God there is a “dynamic impulse that brings unity and is shown in the way the Church hold together.”¹²⁹ Of course the tragedy of schism leaves the most troublesome question of the possibility of unity.

¹²⁶ Ratzinger. *The Mystery of the Eucharist*. 347.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 346.

¹²⁸ Ratzinger. *The Church as Community*. 52.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Chapter Three

The Growth of the Community

The growth of the community is the goal, and the means to the goal, of the Church. In the chapter of *CD* following the description of the true Church, Barth explains that the growth of the community is the goal in both the horizontal and vertical axes. The Church itself is the means to this goal in that the members themselves cause it to happen, and to continue to happen, by the very act of their growing, in both the horizontal and vertical dimensions.

In the context of *CD* this section is part of the larger mission of Volume IV, on the Doctrine of Reconciliation. The Church's role in the history of God reconciling himself with humanity is discussed in §67. As the Church announces the message of God's reconciliation with humanity, it grows in numbers and its members grow in character and in their connection with God. Barth discusses growth as a necessary alteration in the individual members. The Church grows in numbers, allowing the continual integration of new members. The sanctification of the Church members occurs as they grow in character and in their relationship with God.

Barth elucidates three types of growth that the Church might seek to attain. The first is growth by converts, or horizontal growth. This is simply the multiplication of members. The second is growth in the world's esteem. The third is the vertical growth, which is the spiritual improvement of its members. Two related ideas are also discussed in this chapter. They are the questions What is the power of the community? and Is Jesus himself the community?

I. Growth by Converts

Though it may seem banal, Barth warns against dismissing the importance of

multiplication of members. While other directions of growth are important, “the communion of saints shows itself to be fruitful in the mere fact that as it exists it enlarges its own circle and constituency in the world.”¹³⁰ The Church may, at times, seem under duress or waning in influence. The threat of irrelevancy is, however, not to be feared, as the Church is not subject to temporal determinants to a degree higher than it is to its divine determinants. It “has the supreme power to extend in this way...and that as a subject which grows *per definitionem* it has an astonishing capacity even for numerical increase.”¹³¹

This numerical increase, “this primitive, if we like, but not really non-essential aspect of the growth of the community,”¹³² is a consistent reality of the history of the Church. From its beginnings to its present, the physical growth of the Church has occurred despite “the human frailty of the saints and their fellowship”¹³³ and is perhaps an evidence of the divine manipulation of the Church. Even in unlikely periods and in unlikely circumstances, the Church has added new members. “It has propagated itself even where everything seemed to suggest that this was impossible.”¹³⁴

Barth asks if this numerical increase is “merely a question, as in other human societies, of men drawing large crowds and thus enjoying success?”¹³⁵ If the growth of the community is only concentrated on its external growth, it is unhealthy. If the Church also attends to the vertical growth of its members, it “becomes propaganda on behalf of its own spatial expansion.”¹³⁶ The temptation to focus on physical growth can be warded against by “proclaiming the kingdom of

¹³⁰ CD IV, 2. 645.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid. 646.

¹³³ Ibid. 645.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 646.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

God.”¹³⁷ Undiluted, the preaching of the gospel is a work that is at once a hope for converts and an attestation of the core truths of the religion.

The mission of the Church is described by Ratzinger with the idea of a *commercium*, an exchange. Veering towards Barth's own dialectical approach, he explains that there is “an exchange between God and the world,” which leads to “something that can be described as *'dialogue.'*”¹³⁸ A mission of the Church is to point beyond itself, to Christ. It engages with the world in the hope of introducing its people “into that *sanctum commercium*, into that holy exchange which began when God became man.”¹³⁹ The community announces the Incarnation and the reconciliation that is encoded therein. This is the mission of the Church, continuing Christ's work of proclaiming the salvation to the world. The simple expectation for growth lies in the horizontal dimension.

The Church seeks to add to its number, but it should do so in submission to the power that accomplishes it, allowing it to rule and being in service to it.¹⁴⁰ The number added, even by the authority of God's power, will not amount to the *eschaton*. The final configuration of God's people is the promise which the provisional community announces, and lives to a certain extent.

The current community will be “more concerned about the realisation of its own communion; the common reception and exercise of the *sancta* by the *sancti*.”¹⁴¹ The task of the Church is to announce the *eschaton*, and it must operate in the light of that, but its present is also important. Its present task of growing Christians, both by conversion and by discipleship, and facilitating the communion and unity of all Christians is essential to its character.

¹³⁷ Ibid. 647.

¹³⁸ Ratzinger. *Volk Gottes*. 109, 110. (in Heim. 297.)

¹³⁹ Heim. 297.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

One of the primary ways the individual Christian within the community can express the missionary nature of the Church is by revealing Christ as the Crucified. Individual Christians do this by their own suffering, the sharing in Christ's suffering.¹⁴² The growth in numbers is achieved by the conversion of those who are fed by the body of Christ, which was broken and thus made available by the Cross. "From Christ's Passion proceeds "[t]he feeding of the poor and the turning of the nations to worship the God of Israel."¹⁴³ The centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the individual Christian is affirmed by his emphasis on the Cross as a symbol of evangelism.

Barth notes the emphasis on physical growth found in the books of Luke, both the Gospel and Acts. Despite the promises of increase, Jesus' dim prophecy suggests a contradiction. In Luke, it is written, "And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"¹⁴⁴ Barth can only conclude that the physical increase of the Church will continue but that the Church should nevertheless accept "the fact that in relation to the world the community must always recognise and confess that it is a little flock."¹⁴⁵

The mission which "relies on the cooperation of those persons whom God calls and sends forth, is to serve for the salvation of the whole world and all times and has as content and goal the growth of the 'Kingdom of God.'"¹⁴⁶ The expansion of the kingdom of God within the world occurs when individuals experience an "encounter with the incarnate Son of God," through "the preaching of the Church."¹⁴⁷ The numerical increase of the Church is the ground on which the

¹⁴² Heim. 298.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Luke 18:8. NRSV.

¹⁴⁵ CD IV, 2. 647.

¹⁴⁶ Ratzinger. *The Mystery of the Eucharist*. 353.

¹⁴⁷ Ratzinger. *The Church as Communion*. 130.

expansion occurs.

The missionary activity of the Church is sourced in the Eucharist for Ratzinger. He sees the task neatly summarized in Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19, the Great Commission. In this, he finds “the continuation of the Incarnation and of Christ's whole work of redemption.”¹⁴⁸ These two represent the Father sending the Son and so are reflected in the Church's inheritance of the mission of announcing the Son to the world. “The missionary aspect is a structural element of its very nature.”¹⁴⁹ The Church does not exist apart from this fundamental component. As the Eucharist celebrates the culmination of Jesus' earthly ministry, the message it proclaims is the message Christ proclaimed on the Cross. It is with this message that the Church goes to the world.

The very centrepiece of Church life is the Eucharist. It is the centre of the Church's life and it is the centre of the individual Christian's life. The intertwining of mission with the sacrament is natural and unavoidable.

II. Growth in the World's Esteem

The second type of growth described by Barth sees the Church seeking the approval of the world. It is not necessarily evidenced by numerical, horizontal growth, though expansion could be the source of attempts to grow in the world's esteem. Numerical growth can also result from attempts to grow in the world's esteem. The primary goal, however, is to convince those in the world to hold a high opinion of the Church.

Barth only discusses this second type of growth briefly. In fact, more information might

¹⁴⁸ Ratzinger. *The Mystery of the Eucharist*. 358.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 359.

be found in his question than in his answer:

Can it really be characteristic of the communion of saints to increase in consequence and prestige and influence and outward pomp in the world around; to command increasing authority and esteem for itself as a recognised force, both from the state and from all other human societies; to win an assured and generally acknowledged place in the structure and activity of worldly politics and scholarship and literature and art?¹⁵⁰

His answer is no. This is a question that always seems to be of high importance. It is being asked when pastors are “diluting the wine with a little water”¹⁵¹ to soften the harsh edges of the Gospel message.

Barth rejects the notion that the Church should grow in the world's esteem. The world will honour the object of the Church's adoration when the “Lord is manifest to the world.”¹⁵² The glory belongs to Christ and will be given in its own time. The Church can be “thankful for all the necessary space that it is granted in the world to fulfil its task.”¹⁵³

Barth believed that the Church is contaminated by its allegiance to any given political system. Early in his career he judged the infamous “Manifesto of the Ninety-Three” to be an attempt by some members of the Church to seek the world's approval over God's. This document summarily supported the goals of Germany in the First World War, dismissing the international accusations of impropriety regarding Belgium.¹⁵⁴ Signed by the intellectual elite of Germany, it nonetheless disgusted Barth, who had already begun to doubt the integrity of a war justified by Christians, some forty years prior to the publication of the volume of *CD* on view in this thesis.¹⁵⁵

More than forty years later, Barth reflected on this document:

¹⁵⁰ *CD* IV, 2. 648.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* 647.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* 648.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *To the Civilized World* (The North American Review 1919) 284-7

¹⁵⁵ Oates *Karl Barth on Theology and Philosophy* (Oxford 2012) 46.

One day in early August 1914 stands out in my personal memory as a black day...Among these intellectuals I discovered to my horror almost all of my theological teachers whom I had greatly venerated. In despair over what this indicated about the signs of the time I suddenly realized that I could not any longer follow either their ethics and dogmatics or their understanding of the Bible and of history. For me at least, 19th century theology no longer held any future.¹⁵⁶

This extreme reaction indicates one of Barth's most serious concerns for the purity of the Christian Church: the threat of nationalism. By joining with a political cause "the Christian Church would be serving strange gods, forgetting that the Kingdom of Him who is its Lord 'is not of this world' but has come into the world as the light of God."¹⁵⁷

In 1934, the possibility arose again of the Church pandering to the political powers of the world. Possessing a level of influence he lacked two decades earlier, Barth drafted a document in response to the rise of a new political power that sought union with the Church. It was none other than Hitler that he stood against this time. Barth drafted the famous "Barmen Declaration," which announced a Christian opposition to Nazism, particularly in the founding of Hitler's national church.¹⁵⁸ Though relieved of his duties at Bonn for refusal to swear an "oath of allegiance to the führer, as I should have to do as the holder of a state office,"¹⁵⁹ Barth continued to actively oppose Nazism in his home, the neutral state of Switzerland. This may be seen as contradictory of positions he held before and after the Third Reich, where he calls for an apolitical response from theologians.

Barth set out to purify theology from pagan philosophies to look forward to a Christianity that was not encumbered by the weight of the world's systems, whether jingoistic, philosophical,

¹⁵⁶ McCormack, Bruce. *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* (Clarendon 1995) 78.
Originally printed in: Karl Barth *Evangelical Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (John Knox 1978) 14.

¹⁵⁷ Barth *Against the Stream* (SCM 1954) 86.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid 47.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

or even political. It is not at all coincidental that it was against the backdrop of Hitler's rise that Barth's work flourishes.

Even after the war Barth wrote, "[The Church's] business must not be the proclaiming and advocacy of some mixture of religion and politics, but solely the preaching of the one gospel, the joyful message of God's free grace in Jesus Christ."¹⁶⁰ While he may have contradicted his position during the war, his central purpose remained pure: the free proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Quite simply, Ratzinger believed that the Church cannot "conform herself to the world without betraying Christ's mission."¹⁶¹ On this point, Barth and Ratzinger seem to be in almost perfect agreement.

The Church is for the world, but not for the pleasure of the world on its own terms, but for the sanctification of the world on God's terms. This agreement suggests a shared optimism in the *eschaton*, which will see God reconciling himself fully to the world. The political growth of the Church is not the goal, but successful evangelism is.

Ratzinger warns about the infectious and discouraging faith of many Christians, likening it to "a very heavy baggage that they drag along but that they aren't really joyful about."¹⁶² Though this demonstrates his sensitivity to the appeal the Church might hold for those outside of it, he is clearly not suggesting any softening of the Christian message.

III. Vertical Growth

While the numerical increase, or horizontal growth, of the Church is admitted as

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 91.

¹⁶¹ Heim. 296-7.

¹⁶² Ratzinger. *Salt of the Earth*. 122.

necessary, the strength of the Church and the hope of its continued horizontal growth is contingent on the success of its vertical growth. This intensive growth must be made a priority. When effort in this growth is applied actively and faithfully, the community may grow extensively as well. But intensive growth will not occur if the primary pursuit is extensive growth.¹⁶³ Intensive growth naturally flows into extensive growth.

The path to vertical growth is one that increases faith, leading to better “knowledge and confession, to better thought and penitence and joy, to better prayer and hope and proclamation and worship...in short from good to better communion of the saints in holy things.”¹⁶⁴ The Church is entrusted with these holy things and the vertical growth is the better use of these. The Christians enjoying this growth are acting as the *communio peccatorum*, yet also as *sancti* increasing “in relation to the *sancta*.”¹⁶⁵ As beings existing in a time and a place, the Church can act as nothing other than the *communio peccatorum* even though they take on the most holy of missions. Barth explains that this must be so because “there is a limit which it [Christendom] cannot and should not pass because it is not ordained to give a perfect but only a provisional and therefore imperfect representation of the new humanity.”¹⁶⁶ So the community is dealing with the holy things as the saints, but within the parameters of the community of sinners. “The community of the *sancti* has to respect this limit of its relationship to being a *sancta*.”¹⁶⁷

The success of any vertical growth is mysteriously sourced and “astonishing.”¹⁶⁸ The power which brings about this growth is “immanent in the community itself”¹⁶⁹ but clearly not

¹⁶³ CD IV, 2. 648.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 648-9.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 648.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 649.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 650.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

from the minds and wills of the Christians involved, as their minds and wills would not be suitably oriented to the things of God. This power to grow Christians intensively cannot be led then by Christians, but is rather the directing force, leading Christians and “[i]n their own astonishment it will continually exalt the lowly, enrich the poor, give joy to the sad and make heroes of the feeble.”¹⁷⁰ It is the very essence of the Christian message, enacted throughout history and guiding individuals in their growth and thereby guiding the Church, in all its expressions, in its own growth. Echoing his warning about the focus Christians put on the type of growth they aspire to, Barth claims that the Church, “as it grows spiritually...may also grow in the first way, extensively and numerically,”¹⁷¹ as a natural expansion in all directions because of the Spirit's guidance in the intensive growth of the individual Christians.

The vertical growth of the Church might be summarized as simply the sanctification of its members. Heim notes that Ratzinger's essays on Vatican II from 1975, 1985, and 2000 all conclude with “the universal call of all members of the People of God to holiness.”¹⁷² His appeal to holiness is for all members of the Church. The priesthood has its special role and the laity theirs. In the task of seeking holiness they are united.

The means by which the members of the community may become holy are the sacraments, particularly the central sacrament of the Eucharist. Through the sacraments, grace is conferred.¹⁷³ The individual is absorbed into the whole, becoming another body in orbit of the central Body. The Christian abandons self-centredness, acknowledging the error of such a life

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Heim. 396.

¹⁷³ Ratzinger. *The Mystery of the Eucharist*. 46.

and joins as a brother or sister in a “dance of love around the one center.”¹⁷⁴

The description of holiness described by *Lumen Gentium*, which Ratzinger underlines, describes Christ's holiness being conferred upon the Church.¹⁷⁵ The gift is complete, in terms of redemption and justification. It is not based on the good works of the person, but on the grace of God. But the application of this gracious bestowing of holiness is the recipient pursuing right-living. In this sense, holiness is a duty as well as a gift. The call is universal, expected of all Christians.¹⁷⁶

Ratzinger affirmed the Marian section of *Lumen Gentium* in his post-conciliar review. He cites eschatological, cosmic, typological, and covenantal reasons. Each of his defences speaks to his concern for the holiness of the Church and the holiness of the individuals comprising it.

Mary points to a Church connected to the future, “into an area beyond human intervention and disposition.”¹⁷⁷ Mariology indicates a strong eschatology which suggests the liturgy as “a connection between the Church's earthly and heavenly life.”¹⁷⁸ Ratzinger cites Mary's position as handmaid of the Lord with the “Church of the poor,” and the continuity between the Old and the New Covenants represented by her life story.¹⁷⁹

Compared with Barth's call for holiness within the provisional limitations of the community, there seems to be some continuity between the writers. Both systems rely on a realized future state in which God's work with humanity has reached a stage beyond the Church.

Ratzinger's defence of *Lumen Gentium* shows a genuine devotion to the doctrine and an

¹⁷⁴ Heim. 399.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 101.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 100-2;
Lumen Gentium. 11, 39-42.

¹⁷⁷ Heim. 400.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 399-400.

integrated vision of its place within the systematic theology of Rome. Of course, Karl Barth held a much different perspective of Mariology. It is known that Barth attended a lecture on the subject given by Karl Rahner during his post-conciliar visit. Immediately following the lecture, Barth convened with Rahner, Otto Semmelroth, and Ratzinger himself to further discuss the doctrine.¹⁸⁰

As reported in the first chapter of this thesis, the Secretariat for Christian Unity requested that Barth not publish the Catholic-sourced content of his conversations in Rome. A request to which he acceded. However, a short letter concerning Mariology, written by Barth to an unknown Catholic recipient, is published in the back of the book. This letter describes Barth's negative view of the doctrine, seeing it as a “grotesque” misinterpretation of the *theotokos* of the Council of Ephesus, which “was a formula to aid in expressing Christology, and not a mariological statement.”¹⁸¹

Barth then goes on to claim that the recipient of his letter is refusing to acknowledge the theological and historical problems of the doctrine for the sake of maintaining the status quo.¹⁸² He accuses two others, left nameless, of devoting themselves to the doctrine for the same reason. Given the report that Barth met with Ratzinger and Semmelroth to discuss Rahner's presentation, a simple speculation of who he accuses is unavoidable.

Barth's short polemic ends requesting the recipient not present on the doctrine again¹⁸³ and a dismissive account of the use of Mariology at Vatican II. He asserts that Mariology was cited “out of a sense of duty,” and “deliberately avoided...in all the important statements, or

¹⁸⁰ Barth. *Ad Limina Apostolorum*. 14.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 60.

¹⁸² Ibid. 60-1.

¹⁸³ This suggests that the intended recipient of the letter was Karl Rahner, as Barth had listened to his lecture on the subject briefly before writing.

used...only for decorative purposes.”¹⁸⁴ Ratzinger would disagree since, as shown above, he found the Mariological section of *Lumen Gentium* to be not only warranted in the ecclesiological discussion, but essential in the call for holiness.

Though both men undoubtedly view the call to holiness as central to the Christian life and would also cite Christ as the source of the Church's holiness, they arrive at this view by following quite different roads. Ratzinger goes by way of the Church's nuanced and intricate path through Mariology and Barth finds it in the presence of Christ within the community.

IV. What is the Source of the Community's Growth?

The types of growth, extensive and intensive, have been discussed. This section attempts to identify the source of power that enables these growths in the Church.

As the Church's growth is the “expression, fulfilment and mark of life,” the source of its growth might naturally be called “the immanent power of life.”¹⁸⁵ This points directly to the heart of the Church and its growth. Jesus, as the perfect image of man and as the model precursor of the resurrected state for all of humanity, is the basis of the Church. The Church is based on him, it is directed by him, and its growth is done in his power. The success and growth, in both dimensions, of the Church is possible because “the community lives as the communion of saints because and as Jesus lives.”¹⁸⁶

The source of the community's growth, for Ratzinger, is tied intimately with the regular communion between God and the Church in the form of the Eucharist. The constant interaction renews and invigorates the Church.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 62.

¹⁸⁵ *CD* IV, 2. 651.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

The Holy Spirit is “the love that unites and draws into abiding unity.”¹⁸⁷ It accomplishes this within the Godhead¹⁸⁸ and for the Christian community.¹⁸⁹ Ratzinger's pneumatology is directly informed by Augustine, and so is admittedly “less timely [though provides] the advantage of having a great witness to the tradition speak to us here.”¹⁹⁰

Following Augustine, he describes the Holy Spirit as gift¹⁹¹ and discusses the importance of “the humility of love”¹⁹² for the Church and for the individual Christians comprising it. The Holy Spirit gives life and unity to believers, completing the Church. Without his presence, it is not a Church.¹⁹³

In the section on the “true Church,” Barth explicitly cites the Holy Spirit as the “quickenning power”¹⁹⁴ that builds up the Church. This might seem at first contradictory to the assertion in this chapter that the Church is empowered by Jesus.

Parsing out the specific chores of the Trinity is not a straightforward division of labour though and Barth reminds “the Holy Spirit is the authentic and effective self-attestation of the risen and living Lord Jesus.”¹⁹⁵ In other words, the Holy Spirit does not act in isolation, as a figure possessing a percentage of power, with a specific task in Church-building. The Holy Spirit acts singly but with the intention of drawing the subject of his work toward Jesus. He attests to Jesus, and Jesus self-attests through the Holy Spirit.

The nearness of the Spirit is essential to the Church, for both Augustine and Ratzinger.

¹⁸⁷ Ratzinger. *The Church as Communion*. 45.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. 41.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 42.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 39-40.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. 46-50.

¹⁹² Ibid. 52.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ *CD IV*, 2. 616.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 651.

There is no division in the Church, between its physical and spiritual parts. It is one Church, its parts fully integrated, “[i]n the very fact of being visible, 'empirical,' in the sacraments, in the Word, and in love, she is the home of the Spirit, and the Spirit grants his presence in the concrete community of those who support and bear with one another on Christ's account.”¹⁹⁶ The nearness of the Spirit binds together the Church's spiritual and physical aspects.

The Holy Spirit is not just an influence on the Church, but gives it its meaning and its power. It is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus plants his Church. Following Augustine, Ratzinger argues the Spirit builds the Church “after the captivity...the devil is captivity.”¹⁹⁷ There is a sense that the devil is contained and humanity is free, or freer than it once was, and it is in the space of this new freedom that the Church is planted. This freedom is constituted among the human race by the Cross, which banished the devil,¹⁹⁸ and is available to the individual. The individual can become free by entering the Church and joining it; “anyone is free who belongs to the house; freedom is being at home.”¹⁹⁹

As powered by the Holy Spirit, the Church is unique in its possession of divine truth. For both Augustine and Ratzinger, this offers another aspect of the freedom found in Church, echoing Jesus' principle in The Gospel of John 8:32: “Freedom is indissolubly related to truth, which is the real home of man.”²⁰⁰ So a power of the Holy Spirit in building the Church lies in bringing individual persons into harmony with their converted selves. What Ratzinger, through Augustine, is arguing is that humans outside of the Church are broken and they are set aright when they come under the care of the Holy Spirit, whose home is the Church. In this way, the truth is “the

¹⁹⁶ Ratzinger. *The Church as Communion*. 54.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 56-7.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 57.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. 58.

real home of man,” but it is found in the Church, which is the home of the Holy Spirit.²⁰¹

Though the Holy Spirit is the power of the Church, the foundation of it is on a single event that occurred in a time and a space. Ratzinger views the Last Supper as the inauguration of the Church; the first Passover saw the beginnings of Israel and the last Passover saw the beginnings of the next foundation in Israel.²⁰²

Barth asserts that Jesus' role as the forebear of the resurrection is introduced through the Holy Spirit. Christians receive this knowledge, by which they are “distinguished in the first instance from all other men.”²⁰³ The Church is founded on this and has its mission in the further proclamation of this and grows by the same power which resurrected Christ. From its founding to the final culmination of the *eschaton*, which marks the end of the Church, it is powered by “the Holy Spirit as the self-attestation of Jesus.”²⁰⁴

Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father and so he is active with the Church at a distance. Barth argues that Jesus is distant but connected by way of the Holy Spirit acting as his agent. As Jesus is the heart of the Church, and as the Church is his body, Jesus' remoteness indicates the Church is at distance from even itself. That is, Jesus being remote from the Church, the Church is, in a sense, remote from “its own true life.”²⁰⁵ The unbridgeable distance between the transcendent Jesus and the Church is bridged by Jesus. God is above man and remote from him, yet “God is not limited to be there, since He is not the prisoner of His own height and distance.”²⁰⁶ Jesus conquers the impossible distance between himself and his Church by being a

²⁰¹ Ibid. 56-8.

²⁰² Heim. 272.

²⁰³ *CD* IV, 2. 651.

²⁰⁴ Ibid. 651-2.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 652.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. 653.

God not bound by such laws. “It is He who can be both there and here.”²⁰⁷

In this traversal between the divine and the human realms, Jesus is never not himself. He is the Son of God and the Son of Man regardless of the place of his activity. In his engagements with humanity he might be considered to be in his earthly-historical form, though this only indicates a venue not a characteristic or an identity.²⁰⁸

Jesus is at once transcendent and imminent. The Holy Spirit is, likewise, because “the only content of the Holy Spirit is Jesus.”²⁰⁹ This means that Jesus is communicated through the Holy Spirit and is the object which the Holy Spirit directs humans to. Jesus self-attests through the Holy Spirit, presenting, imparting, revealing and disclosing himself, to different audiences and for different purposes. The remote and heavenly Jesus communicates these ways to humans living in a time and a place through the Holy Spirit. In this way, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are one. They are united in mission.

Jesus and the Holy Spirit operate within humanity in this age only. In the *eschaton* there will be a fulfillment of the promises of the Church. Humanity will be elevated, sanctified and reconciled with God. Direct contact with Jesus will resume, not only through the introduction and self-attestation of the Holy Spirit, but in full actuality. Barth argues that until that final configuration of humanity, the Church exists as the Body of Christ, “the earthly-historical form of His existence.”²¹⁰ It is directed by Jesus and powered by Jesus, through the self-attestation of the Holy Spirit.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. 654.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

V. Jesus is the community

The final two topics Barth discussed in this chapter are quite expansive and worthy of much further study. Their presentation here is not nearly complete, as Barth is using them to further discuss the source of the Church's power to grow. The Church as the Body of Christ and the relationship between the Church and the Kingdom of God are topics that he explains in more detail elsewhere.

1. The life of the community

Jesus is the community. But the “community is not Jesus Christ.”²¹¹ The primary element must remain independent. Jesus is transcendent, elevated above all creation, separate and free of any limitations. The Church is bound by, among other things, time and place. The community “lives, and may and can live, only because and as He lives.”²¹² It cannot be reversed. The only direction this exchange works is for Christ to precede the Church, offering it his life so that it also lives.

As “its heavenly Head,”²¹³ Jesus is peculiar in his leadership of the Church. It is not simply an object exterior to him. The Church is “a predicate of His being...it is His body.”²¹⁴ The Church has its being in him, though it is important to maintain that the Church is not him. Its “being...is exhausted and enclosed in His.”²¹⁵ The community, comprised of sinful humans claiming holiness by proxy, populates the body of Christ, in “His own earthly-historical form of existence”²¹⁶ to carry on his mission of revealing Christ to the world.

²¹¹ Ibid. 655.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

The community is not Jesus, but it is called “to grow up into Him who is the Head.”²¹⁷ The movement and growth toward this goal is accomplished by the body itself.²¹⁸ This does not contradict the idea that the Holy Spirit is the quickening power of the Church, or Jesus as the one expressing directions through the Holy Spirit. The community grows “up into Him” by the faithful integration of its parts. The “unity and differentiation of the community as conditioned by the unity and differentiation of its gifts”²¹⁹ is the method by which this body, existing in history, grows. By Jesus' guidance the community is edified by this growth. With Jesus as head of the community, it is at once striving to become his body and “it is already His body.”²²⁰ The Church is his body, subject “to the consequence of human action but not compromised by the problematic nature of this action.”²²¹ Being directed by Jesus, and for Jesus, and with Jesus, the Church is justifiably considered to be his own body, growing “infallibly.”²²²

The notion of the Church as the community of Jesus is best described by the central act of communion at the centre of all Church life: the eucharist.²²³ Barth identifies the “eucharistic action as the crowning act of worship”²²⁴ as it announces the death of Jesus and the community's anticipation of his return. This two-fold proclamation is the simple acknowledgement of the historical foundation of the Incarnation and the provisional nature of the Church. As such, Barth emphasizes the memorial aspect of the action. He indicates “the work of His real presence,” and

²¹⁷ Ibid. 659.

²¹⁸ Ibid. 660.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Barth's configuration of the Eucharist is complex and deserving of a dedicated study. The scope of this thesis severely limits engagement with his works beyond this particular section on ecclesiology. Paul D. Molnar's exploration of Barth's dealing with the Eucharist is recommended: *Karl Barth and the Theology of the Lord's Supper: A Systematic Investigation*.

²²⁴ CD IV, 2. 658.

describes the Church as the unique venue in which “the *sancta* are proffered and the *sancti* are engaged.”²²⁵ The Eucharist is very clearly an action of the Church and not the divine action. The action that led to the “actual reconciliation, justification, and sanctification” was accomplished “in and by Christ himself.”²²⁶

The Eucharist is a memorial and it is a gift of the Holy Spirit which helps the Church on its mission. Paul Molnar explains Barth's reading of the Lord's Supper:

The key point in connection with the Lord's Supper is that as one is led by the Holy Spirit to this particular future as a member of the pilgrim community, 'the Holy Spirit feeds him with the body of Jesus Christ which was given for him, and strengthens him with the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed for him.'²²⁷

The Lord's Supper is an event which is at once memorial and anticipatory. The bi-directional vantage point of the sacrament is an expression of the individual Christian's experience.

“[L]ooking back and looking forward constitute the life of a Christian.”²²⁸

The Eucharist is “an event that involves both a believing acceptance of the *pledge of salvation* and a self-fulfilling *deed of salvation*.”²²⁹ This means that Christ's promise of salvation is recalled and, in its mystery, delivered in the partaking of the sacrament. It is also a deed in that the participants are active in their reception, as “a believing understanding of the mystery enables and impels us as well to utter a human word ourselves.”²³⁰ The acceptance of the Eucharist is a purely human reaction and a sharing in the mystery.

It is enough to acknowledge that both Barth and Ratzinger come to similar conclusions regarding the intimacy shared between Christ and the Church. Their respective configurations of

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Molnar. 171.

²²⁷ Molnar. 144; quoting *CD IV*, 4. 40.

²²⁸ Barth. *Dogmatics in Outline*. 153.

²²⁹ Ibid. 153.

²³⁰ Ibid.

the Lord's Supper deserve more dedicated research. For the project at hand, we find that the Lord's Supper is both memorial and anticipatory. It is an action of the Church, but it is also an event at which the Christian is in the presence of God.

2. The Kingdom of God

The topic of the kingdom of God cannot adequately be discussed in this thesis, let alone in the final short section of this chapter. However, it is discussed briefly in this section of Barth's *CD* and so his dealing with it is important to the context of his larger argument.

He defines it: "The kingdom of God is the lordship of God established in the world in Jesus Christ."²³¹ The kingdom is synonymous with the Church, as the kingdom describes the sector of "obedient humanity"²³² which exists in a time and a place. The *eschaton* has not been achieved, so the view of the kingdom is limited to the current expression of God's people on earth. The community is therefore the current iteration of the kingdom.

However, the "community is not the kingdom of God."²³³ The community is the provisional kingdom; the announcement of the fully realized kingdom. In the sense that the community is the incomplete, but current, version of the kingdom, the community is not the kingdom but the kingdom is the community.

"[T]here is a real identity...between the Holy One, the kingdom of God as perfectly established in Him, and the communion of saints on earth."²³⁴ These three players are related and their interactions are some of the main subjects of ecclesiology. Barth ties them close together by

²³¹ *CD* IV, 2. 655-6.

²³² *Ibid.* 656.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

claiming a shared identity between them. Jesus is the director of the kingdom and of the community. Existing outside the limitations of earthly reality, he guides and empowers, through the Holy Spirit, the growth of the Church. As the Church grows so grows the kingdom. This shared identity informs “everything that falls to be said concerning its [the community's] life and growth.”²³⁵

Ratzinger's descriptions of the kingdom of God accord with Barth's. The kingdom, although not completed, is understood Christologically as something near. It is not “primarily in the world beyond,” but “something God is doing and will do in the future here on earth.”²³⁶

There is a present and a future aspect to the kingdom. Where the kingdom was only a hope in “the faith of Israel,” Christ's “rule mediates the transition to the aeon to come.”²³⁷ The time of Christ is then the time of the kingdom's entry into this world. This aeon begins with Christ's life on earth and extends to his continued life through the Church. Ratzinger ties Christ the man very closely with the Church, as demonstrated earlier, and because of the original eschatological element in both of them toward the kingdom itself. This tri-partite construction is very similar to Barth's, in which he described the identity shared between the Holy One, the kingdom of God...and the communion of saints on earth.”²³⁸

Their conceptions of the Kingdom of God deserve much more attention, but it is sufficient to conclude that they both see continuity between the person of Christ, the Church, and the kingdom. Each overlaps the other while nevertheless remaining a distinct item.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ratzinger. *Eschatology*. 31.

²³⁷ Ibid. 32.

²³⁸ *CD* IV, 2. 656.

Chapter Four

The Upholding of the Community

The discussions so far, on the description of the true Church, of the Church's growth and of its upholding, build to the discussion of Church law in the final chapter. The final chapter is built on the foundation of these prior chapters.

The ontological description of the true Church contributes the ground on which the other chapters are based, and it is specifically oriented toward the final discussion on Church law. It is necessary to define what the community *is* to later describe what the community *does*.

The discussion of the community's growth is also oriented toward the final chapter on Church law. As the community's membership expands, and as the community's members mature, they are subject to Barth's convention concerning Church growth: "Building up means integration."²³⁹

The integration of the community's members into a continually evolving true Church requires a vigilant understanding of the dangers along the way of this evolution. Also required is the divine support that keeps the community upheld. This is the topic of the chapter at hand. Here Barth turns to the topic of the upholding, or perseverance, of the community. This is not synonymous with the classic doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. These doctrines overlap, however Barth's focus here is not on individual Christians but on the Church as a unique body. The growth of the community assumes its health. In this chapter, Barth explores the areas in which the Church's health is threatened. He identifies two categories of threats to the Church. The first is Outward Danger, or attacks that are external to the Church. The second is Inward

²³⁹ Ibid. 635.

Danger, which describes the internal problems that threaten the Church. Finally, Barth discusses the perseverance of the Church in the face of its destructibility. This chapter will set the stage for the final chapter, in which the attitude, purpose, source, and flexibility of Church law will be explored.

I. Outward Dangers

The outward dangers to the Church affect its extensive growth most directly. The Church becomes an enemy of the world, and its position within the world could alter the freedoms enjoyed by its members. The world may attempt to minimize the Church's message by subtle or outright persecution. Its indifference to Christianity is the other method of attack.²⁴⁰

The Church is part of the world. But its true identity is in its eschatological hope, “[f]or it claims both a very different origin and a very different goal.”²⁴¹ The Church's message of a final, total reconciliation with God can appear to threaten the world, or its order, or its goals. The world is not obliged to accept any of the Church's message and portions of the world may in fact, “feel that they are unsettled and questioned and disturbed and perhaps even menaced by it.”²⁴² The existence of the Church is a kind of threat against the world; of its failure and of its end. The Church's “message is sufficiently revolutionary,”²⁴³ and the faithful preaching of it has, and can again, lead to alienation from the surrounding world.

The alienation can be bridged by the Holy Spirit. Reception of the message “willingly and not unwillingly, or even thoughtfully and not with scorn and anger...is not a human

²⁴⁰ Ibid. 663-5.

²⁴¹ Ibid. 662.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

possibility.”²⁴⁴ The capacity for choosing God is nonexistent. This failing relieves the Church of responsibility for the rejection it, or its message, may encounter. Rejection acknowledges that the Church “must be in some form a community under trial and perhaps even under the cross.”²⁴⁵ The task of actually changing the hearts of the naturally offended citizens of the world belongs to the Holy Spirit. “who moves where He wills and whom no one can command.”²⁴⁶

When the Holy Spirit does not seem to move, “the community must be reconciled to the fact that in some form it will meet with the resistance and even the counter-attacks of the outside world.”²⁴⁷ This could come in forms as mild as indifference or as aggressive as segregation. Barth, in his time and place, offered the quite severe warning that the Church may find its only refuge in the “ghetto and in the near or distant future its external repression and extinction.”²⁴⁸ Such severe occurrences are not new to the Church, and having learned of the crimes (*odium humani generis*) committed against the Jews in the previous decade Barth was probably not exaggerating his fears. Despite these grim possibilities, Barth assures that the Church will continue to be a growing community, though its growth would occur in probably smaller increments.

1. Persecution

The attack here is the pressure to conform the message to the world's tastes, which would “at least reduce it to a more innocuous form.”²⁴⁹ The pressure is subtle, perhaps starting with the

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid. 663.

²⁴⁶ Ibid. 662.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid. 663.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

suggestion “to make a few concessions which may well appear at first sight to be non-essential.”²⁵⁰ He goes on to warn about social restrictions that might be placed on the Church, diminishing the Church's appeal to “the younger generation...so that it is reduced to in the world's opinion to a cult, and as such pushed aside and made an object of ridicule and scorn and even hatred.”²⁵¹ All of these possibilities anticipate the social isolation the Church may endure.

The warning comes with a project. In light of the subtle persecutions of the Church's message, the members of the community might be faced with the fact “that it costs something to be a living member of the living community; that it will mean decision and act and quite but also open endurance; and that the question has therefore to be faced whether it is wise to continue to do so.”²⁵² These realizations may not occur to Christians living in peace with the world. For Christians living through periods of these subtle persecutions, decisions about the reasonableness of staying with the community may arise.

He warns that this could be a first step to actual persecution, perhaps leading “one day to the forfeiture of liberty, and in the more distant future – who knows? - of life itself?”²⁵³ In extreme or mild periods of persecution, “the community on earth, the *communio sanctorum*, lives in the persons of these many Christians who are so terribly assailed and harassed.”²⁵⁴ It is the success of God within these broken vessels that is always being tested, in times of peace and in times of turmoil.

Acknowledging the Church's eschatological character is fundamental to Ratzinger's ecclesiology. For him, this element of the Church's nature is intimately connected with the

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid. 663-4.

²⁵³ Ibid. 664.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

celebration of the Eucharist. The eschatological character is an expression of the Christocentricity of the Church.²⁵⁵ This Christocentric view informs his position on the Pilgrim Church's responsibility to evangelize.

One of Ratzinger's concerns throughout his career is the reception of the Gospel message in the world. Rather than criticize the world which might reject Christ, he sought to use the inevitable, though not necessarily constant, rejection to strengthen the ministers of the Gospels. The dignity of the Gospel required its bearers to stoop, as Christ had demonstrated, to the place of the hearers. This not only maximizes any potential effect, it also generates a genuine humility within the Christian.²⁵⁶ Moments in which the Christian may be rejected by the world may lead to serious doubts within the Church, which he acknowledges. These desperate moments might cause the Christian to feel like there is “[o]nly a loose plank bobbing over the void...to hold him up, and it looks as if he must eventually sink.”²⁵⁷

Ratzinger suggests that the atheist is not any better off, and is plagued by the inverse doubt. Where the Christian may wonder if it is untrue, the atheist wonders if it is true.²⁵⁸ The power that the Christian has in this struggle for belief is the nearness of God. In the person of Jesus Christ, God drew near and “the intangible has become tangible.”²⁵⁹ Jesus “is not simply the witness...he is the presence of the eternal itself in this world.”²⁶⁰ The Incarnation binds the eternal with the temporal. It is the doctrine on which the Church's eschatological character and its sacraments make sense.

²⁵⁵ Heim. 339-341.

²⁵⁶ Ratzinger. *Introduction to Christianity*. 17.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. 19.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 20-1.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. 48.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

Despite the threats that the Church faces in its earthly-historical form, its eschatological nature, that is, its role as a pilgrim community, enable it to bear through. Just as Barth sees persecution as a means to greater discipline for the Christian, Ratzinger also sees it as an opportunity for spiritual growth. Martyrdom is one of the most effective tools for the energizing of a community. Ratzinger sees a value in it beyond its potential to help the Church grow in number. He explains that martyrdom is a way that the Christian can share in Christ's sufferings and even "become a Eucharist"²⁶¹ themselves. Citing Paul's Letter to the Philippians²⁶² and Polycarp's death, he finds a pattern of reversal. The stench of death is replaced with the sweetness of the smell of bread at Polycarp's immolation.²⁶³ Physical death has become an announcement of life beyond this plane, reflecting the Cross.

2. Indifference

The second type of attack against the Church is the simple indifference of the people of the world to the message and existence of the community on earth. Though less dangerous physically and immediately, Barth wonders if the world's indifference might surpass persecution in its capacity to discourage Christians.²⁶⁴ "The community is strengthened under pressure,"²⁶⁵ and the pressure of persecution has led to some of the more dramatic increases in the external growth of the Church. With that unexpected result, persecution may be less destructive than indifference to a Church's ministry.

²⁶¹ Ratzinger. *The Church as Communion*. 112.

²⁶² Philippians 2:17. "But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you." NRSV.

²⁶³ Ratzinger. *The Church as Communion*. 113.

²⁶⁴ *CD IV*, 2. 664.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

The Church as Gospel-bearer is nullified under this type of pressure. The Church is considered passé at this or that juncture where the offence of the Gospel intersects with the desires of the world. The disinterest in the Church's eschatological message is so complete “to the point of laying occasional claim to the ministrations of the community to give light and colour to its practical atheism...in the forms of baptisms and confirmations and weddings and festivals and national days of prayer and the life.”²⁶⁶ The religious symbols and ceremonies might be stripped of their spiritual significance for the decoration of the social lives of the unbelievers.

In such a situation, the Church is beyond even hatred and ridicule. It is ignored. So the question that Barth puts is extremely important to the Christians who feel their community has lost the world's attention: “Will the community be upheld and not disintegrate in face of this neutral but for that reason all the more weighty attack?”²⁶⁷

The religious disinterest of the world is a concern found throughout Ratzinger's work. His engagements with the modern world were complicated. He was concerned with the subjectivism of the modern and post-modern world. The stability of any organization is threatened in a world driven by the ever-changing opinions of its individual citizens. The impact this subjectivism might have on the Church concerned him, as the Church was obviously quite a different type of organization to him but not viewed as such by many since the Enlightenment.²⁶⁸

Regardless of the world's interest in the Church, it is by definition outside of the Church and so, outside of the earthly home of God's truth. Therefore the world, he argues, receives only a partial description of the Church and its beliefs. This disintegrated picture can only be a distortion of the full truth. Taken as isolated pieces, the Church's message can appear archaic or

²⁶⁶ Ibid. 665.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ratzinger. *Salt of the Earth*. 163-4.

even cruel. However, it is in “the inner life of faith” that the “individual elements can be correctly related to one another.”²⁶⁹ Properly transmitting the complete, integrated system of belief to unbelievers is complicated. For such a task, he suggests caution and compassion.²⁷⁰

One hope he expressed for the relevance of the Church was its position as a force against oppression. Its role in bringing social justice gave people “a place of freedom and sets a sort of limit to oppression.”²⁷¹ Christians are uniquely equipped for sacrificial service, as the loss of personal interest is interpreted as a gain. “At the very moment when you think you have to possess yourself and defend yourself, precisely then you ruin yourself.” Selfishness is not only directly censured, it also inhibits the Christian's mission. Rather than seek personal gain, Christians “are not built as an island whose only foundation is itself. Rather, “you are built for love, and therefore for giving, for renunciation, for the pruning of yourself. Only if you give yourself, if you lose yourself, as Christ puts it, will you be able to live.”²⁷²

The world's indifference is indeed a difficult barrier that Ratzinger acknowledges. As with his embracing of persecution, he suggests the world's indifference can lead to greater Christian service. By participating in the attempts to bring justice to the world and by sharing the peace of the eschatological promise of justice that is unique to the Church, Christians can offer service to the world.

II. Inward Dangers

Having discussed the external dangers to the Church, against which the community can

²⁶⁹ Ibid. 171.

²⁷⁰ Ibid. 170-2.

²⁷¹ Ibid. 165.

²⁷² Ibid. 168.

only react, Barth moves on to describe the two types of internal attacks facing the Church. They are alienation, which he also calls secularisation, and self-glorification, which he also calls sacralisation.

Both of these inward dangers are more accurately considered a mixture of inward and outward dangers. The alienation of the Church is sourced within the Church, by its members' desire to resemble the world and to participate in its activities. It is a capitulation to the world's interests by the degradation of the Church's message. Alienation is the result of a positive, perhaps covetous, reaction to the world. Self-glorification is also a reaction to the world. It is a negative reaction, a turning inward. Both are reactions to the world, dismissing God as the source of their community.

1. Alienation

The Church becomes secularized as it finds its purpose, and takes its direction, from a source other than God. This occurs when the community “allows its environment, or spontaneous reference to it, to prescribe and impose a law which is not identical with the Law of the Gospel.”²⁷³ The influence of the Holy Spirit becomes secondary to the influence of the Church's surroundings. This affects various aspects of the Church, namely, its interpretation of Scripture, its ethics, its relationship with secular politics, and the message it is tasked with proclaiming.²⁷⁴

Taken with Barth's earlier warnings about the Church being pressured to capitulate to the world, the sources for secularisation are not not difficult to surmise. It may do so in “an attempt

²⁷³ *CD* IV, 2. 667.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

at self-preservation, in face of the all-powerful world.”²⁷⁵ If the message that the Church is meant to deliver becomes burdensome and it produces enmity with the world, the desire for peace might lead to the distinctions between the Church and the world fading. This desire for a peaceful co-existence with the world is healthy, “so long as there is no secret respect for the fashion of the world.”²⁷⁶ This process of listening to the voice of the world over the voice of God renders the Church meaningless in any of its intended eschatological functions. It becomes “only a part of the world among so much else of the world.”²⁷⁷ The unique eschatological character of the Church is diminished in its pursuit of approval from the world.

Ratzinger cites the example of Pius X. As the French government drew stricter lines between Church and state in 1906, the Catholic concern was that this action “upsets the order providentially established by God in the world, which demands a harmonious agreement between” the Church and the state.²⁷⁸ Despite Pius X's several dramatic warnings about the “evils that this law is about to bring upon a people,”²⁷⁹ he proclaimed his confidence in the future health of the Church. He encouraged the Church, and announced to the world, “that Jesus Christ will not abandon His Church.”²⁸⁰ Pius was in the position of bartering for the retention of the Church's possessions in France. Maintaining possession would have required “a certain integration of the Church into state superintendence.” The problem of secularisation was threatening the Church. The politicization of the community could follow, which would fail Barth's metric by “listening to the voice of a stranger.” Ratzinger reports that Pius X declined the transaction and “declared

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid. 668.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Pius X, *Vehementer Nos* [Encyclical Letter on the French Law of Separation], sec. 3, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10law.htm>

²⁷⁹ Ibid. 14.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

that the *good* of the Church is more important than her *goods*.²⁸¹ This anecdote illustrates the Church's reluctance to participate in the world's affairs to protect its position as an organization somewhat isolated.

In his criticisms of the necessarily subjective qualities of democracy, Ratzinger warns of the negative effects such systems might have if implemented in the Church. As human opinions serve the greater good in democratic situations, the same principles apply in the ecclesiastical one. However, the Church is designed with “the authority to expropriate mankind for its own sake.”²⁸² He later warned of the possibility that the temptation to alter the faith for the sake of expediency, which reorients its purpose: to define what is good for mankind becomes mankind deciding what is good for itself.²⁸³ The threat, as Ratzinger described it, was the rising tide of subjectivism. Though he generally approved of democratic principles in the Church, his warnings of subjectivism were issued alongside his endorsements. The central issue of Christ had to be protected and not submitted for approval to a council of men.²⁸⁴

Churches that become secularized have become Churches “only for the world, the nation, culture, or the state.”²⁸⁵ It is the human failure, always threatening the integrity of the community, fully developed. The replacement of God's voice of “the voice of a stranger to whom it does not belong”²⁸⁶ leads to the secularisation of a Church. When this happens, the community has become alienated from God.

Ratzinger's warnings of the inward danger of alienation generally accord with Barth's.

²⁸¹ Ratzinger. *Salt of the Earth*. 173-4.

²⁸² Heim. 393.

²⁸³ Ibid. 392-3.

²⁸⁴ Ibid. 392-5.

²⁸⁵ *CD IV*, 2. 668.

²⁸⁶ Ibid. 667.

Both claim the danger is in listening to voices other than God's. Their warnings here are natural outgrowths of their similar descriptions of the Pilgrim Church. The political ramifications of friendship with the world are considered dangers by both men, but their primary concern is for the integrity of the message.

2. Self-glorification

The second attack the Church may face from within is the threat of self-glorification, or sacralisation. The goal is still for the Church to have influence in the world, but rather than reducing itself the Church glorifies itself. Churches like this are common but the point at which a community veers into this error can be vague.

How does a community based on service to God become a community that only serves itself? It begins with the acknowledgement that it is a distinct community within the world, and the failure is when it “represents itself as a world of its own within the world.”²⁸⁷ Following the description of the true Church, the self-glorifying one “discloses itself to be His body, the earthly-historical form of His existence, His ambassador to all other men, the representative of His right and claim to the world.”²⁸⁸ These are all correct according to the description of the true Church. However it fails when it observes this definition and regards itself as superior to the rest of humanity.

The self-glorifying Church resembles the true Church, but “its own common spirit replaces the Holy Spirit, and its own work the work of God.”²⁸⁹ Such organizations fail by politicizing the Church and making it into a state among other earthly political states. Barth

²⁸⁷ Ibid. 669.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

admits that the Roman Church may fit this description, at certain times.²⁹⁰ But any Church, even the smallest rural community, can fall prey to the seduction of elevating one's own community above all others, using the supernatural source and goal of the Church as a measure for its temporal superiority to other earthly-historical organizations.

The self-glorifying Church has set itself as an idol.²⁹¹ In “even the tiniest of sects”²⁹² the laws and traditions and patterns of that particular community can be elevated to become a secret society. These communities do not fail for maintaining traditions or for permitting distinctions between themselves and other communities, secular or religious. A community like this fails at being the true Church when “it imposes itself where it owes its witness, and denying and suppressing its witness by witnessing only to itself.”²⁹³ Though the path to becoming a community that glorifies itself rather than glorifying God may be mysterious, the results are quite obvious: the Church stops announcing Christ.

As representatives of the Protestant Church and of the Catholic Church, this is an issue on which a comparison is especially at risk of being trite. The complexities between the traditions on this matter are many. The space allowed for this discussion in this thesis is sufficient only to introduce a few problems.

Despite the temptations for the Church, especially the world's most politically influential Church, to become engaged in a campaign of “witnessing only to itself,” Ratzinger carefully refuses. The work of the Church is to witness to Jesus Christ. The mechanisms of the Church are not special in their right, but are special in their utilization toward the goal of witnessing to

²⁹⁰ Ibid. 669-70.

²⁹¹ Ibid. 670.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

Christ. The Church's attempts to influence the world have been through

conjuring prayers of a deprecatory and imperative nature (exorcisms), through *imploratory and benedictive prayers* (blessings) that bestow God's favor on things and events, and finally through *constitutive consecrations* that lift the things and persons of this world out of their earthly order ("profaneness") and are intended to set them aside and sanctify them for God's service (the "sacral world").²⁹⁴

The goal of these actions is the sanctification of the world, or least of the sanctification of a specific piece of earth in a specific time and place.

The question that Barth might put to such a program is: *Do these actions witness to the Church or do these actions witness to Christ?* Ratzinger could answer affirmatively. It is the sanctification not through admittance to the Roman Catholic Church specifically, but the sanctification of the world through invitation; invitation extended to the world to commune with God and invitation to God, through prayerful petition, to intercede. Further, Ratzinger warns that "Jesus is opposed to any form of righteousness, whether political or ethical, that tries to achieve the Kingdom of God by its own value."²⁹⁵ The mission of the Church is to introduce the world to Jesus Christ.

III. Destructible But Not Destroyed

"No one and nothing in the whole world is so menaced as Christianity and its constitution and action and future."²⁹⁶ The Church faces multiple fronts of attacks. The outside world may persecute or neglect the Church in its mission. The very universe in which it exists is "on the

²⁹⁴ Ratzinger. *The Mystery of the Eucharist*. 124.

²⁹⁵ Ratzinger. *Eschatology*. 31.

²⁹⁶ CD IV, 2. 671.

point of perishing, the power of nothingness lashing out in its final death-throes.”²⁹⁷ The Christians within the Church are “both *extra et intra muros*,”²⁹⁸ adding dangers to be faced from within as well as from without. “No one and nothing is so totally referred for its upholding to a single and superior 'hold' or support.”²⁹⁹

The previous section, explaining these dangers, culminates with these assurances of the Church's perseverance. In the context of the section of *CD* being explored by this thesis, the strange persistence of the Church is important as a demonstration of the divine support guiding it. The argument in the final chapter, on the authority of Church law, is built upon the concept of the Church's endurance and on its reliance on divine guidance.

1. Strange Persistence

Despite the dangers listed and despite the human tendency for sin, the Church perseveres. Its strange persistence is antithetical to its position in the “creaturely world, which is the world of flesh, the world of the perishing man who is assailed by nothingness and all its demons, the world of death.”³⁰⁰ This temporal, finite world nevertheless hosts the Church of Jesus Christ, which, “although it is destructible, it cannot and will not actually be destroyed.”³⁰¹

The threats outlined above are serious and can destroy. The Church may indeed face destruction only to “arise all the stronger.” The neglect of the world may minimize the Church's impact for a time and in a place, “but it cannot and will not break under this burden.” The internal threats of “sloth and dissipation may result in its secularisation, but this will never be so

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid. 670.

²⁹⁹ Ibid. 671.

³⁰⁰ Ibid. 672.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

radical that even in its most serious alienation there does not remain an element which resists that which is secular.” The Church may reach heights of pride in itself that undermine its very existence, yet “the genuine light of the Gospel will again strangely shine out among the *sancti*.”³⁰² Emerging from the rubble of whatever failure the Church endures will always be a remnant.

The recovery of the Gospel and of the Church that bears it will come in the form of “remarkable reformations and prophetic renewals; notable discoveries followed by notable reversions to its origins and equally notable advances into the future.”³⁰³ The community endures through these means, but not by them. The power that restores the Church is obviously divine. These human means are the tools used by God in his restorations. They deal with the present, the past and the future, reaffirming the context of the Church. It is present in this age of the community and it is founded upon the earthly-historical ministry of Jesus and it looks forward to the final reconciliation.

When a Church comes under attack and succumbs to destruction, it is the human element that fails, having “come like all flesh and then departed.”³⁰⁴ Attempts to keep the destruction at bay can be pathetic, if they are based on the same principles that other human organizations might use.

What upholds the community then? Its existence as a sign is the purpose for its perseverance.³⁰⁵ But its purpose is not the same as the power that is keeping it. “It is certainly not

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid. 672-3.

³⁰⁴ Ibid. 673.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

in and by the strength of continuity itself...that the communion of saints is upheld.”³⁰⁶ The historical, creedal and sacramental connection to the Apostles is not sufficient explanation for the continued presence of the Church on earth after so many centuries. How is the community upheld? Barth describes the roles of Scripture and Jesus' work as the factors which uphold the Church despite the dangers faced.

2. Scripture Upholds

The Scripture may seem the most vulnerable of all items within the Church. They have certainly been viewed in a variety of ways throughout the Church's history, having

sometimes been almost completely silenced in a thicket of added traditions, or proclaimed only in liturgical sing-song, or overlaid by bold speculation, or searched only for *dicta probantia* in favour of official or private doctrine, or treated merely as a source of pious or even natural and impious morality, or torn asunder into a thousand shreds...by unimaginative and historico-critical omniscience.³⁰⁷

Barth's reverence for Scripture is obvious here. The power he finds in the Bible has endured despite these incorrect readings of the text, which has somehow maintained the community. Despite the practical problems, Barth insists that there is a supernatural protection of the text, and that it “can speak and make itself heard in spite of all its maltreatment.”³⁰⁸

The “sword of the Spirit,” of Ephesians 6, is the tool used by the Holy Spirit in his upholding of the community.³⁰⁹ The Scripture has persevered over the centuries, finding its way back into the dead Church, sometimes as “an echo awakened in the outside world, so that its

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid. 673-4.

³⁰⁸ Ibid. 674.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

readers have to begin to study it in a new way.”³¹⁰ By whatever path it returns to the Church, the Word returns through the faithful teaching of the Scripture. In “all times and places the Word of God has always been heard in its one, original and authentic form where Scripture has again made itself to be heard and created hearers for itself.”³¹¹

3. Jesus Upholds

Scripture upholds the community only so far as it attests to the person doing the actual work. “He verifies the Scripture simply by the fact that He is its content; that as it is read and heard He Himself is present to speak and act as the living Lord of the Church.”³¹² It is the presence of Jesus in the word and as “the living Lord of the Church,”³¹³ that upholds the Church. Scripture, which has its own role in the upholding of the community, attests to him who “does not fall.”³¹⁴

Ratzinger agrees, that as the true Body of Christ, the Church is indestructible.³¹⁵ The sinful, though redeemed, humans populating the Church are not the defining subjects. Rather, it is the character of Christ, which is continued physically by the Church, that defines the Church.³¹⁶ The unity of the Church is of divine origin, and so it is possible for its success in this capacity despite the imperfect humans populating the church.³¹⁷

Ratzinger suggests another factor in the perseverance of the Church. As agents of Christ, both in the Church and in the world, the apostles have preserved both the message and the

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid. 675.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Heim. 245.

³¹⁶ Ibid. 249.

³¹⁷ Ibid. 249-50.

physical witness of Christ for all of the Church's existence. Apostolic succession has protected the Church by “guaranteeing the continuity and the unity of the faith.”³¹⁸ The preservation of the community's witness to Christ has helped to maintain the catholicity of the Church.³¹⁹ The teachings of the Apostles are preserved through the faithful adherence to their tradition. So it is Scripture that Ratzinger considers an element in the perseverance of the Church, but it is through the tradition of apostolic succession.

On these topics, Barth and Ratzinger share much in common. Their concerns for the health and integrity of the Church are along the same lines. Against Barth's recommendation that “[t]he communion of saints needs defense, protection and preservation,”³²⁰ Ratzinger adds that the Church “lives from the struggle of the unholy to attain holiness.”³²¹ The challenges from within and without are described in similar terms, as is the solution to the Church's persistence despite its destructibility.

³¹⁸ Ratzinger. *The Church as Communion*. 190.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ *CD IV*, 2. 661.

³²¹ Ratzinger. *Introduction to Christianity*. 266.

Chapter Five

The Order of the Community

This ecumenical dialogue will close on the topic of canon law, as this is the topic of the final chapter of Barth's work that is being reviewed. While more common to discuss canon law within the the Catholic Church, Protestant Churches also follow their own procedures. As evident throughout Barth's chapter, the Protestant terminology is "Church order," though he appears to use the term "canon law" interchangeably.

Barth believes order within the community is a necessary reflection of the value that God places on order in a cosmic sense, hence order is "the form in which there is accomplished the upbuilding of the community."³²² The threads from the previous chapters are brought together here. The upbuilding of the community is still on view as an objective. In this mission, the community is upheld by divine participation, as discussed in the chapter previous to this one. Now Barth turns to the method in which the upbuilding may occur. It is by order that the field is set for the upbuilding of the community. The laws of the Church facilitate its growth. Again, reflecting God's value for order, the community of God is naturally most effective when it is managed by order.

Canon law refers to the laws used to manage the Church, and its individual members, in a wide range of activities and beliefs. For the Catholic Church, canon law basically codifies their many religious and social beliefs. It also provides rules for Church governance and liturgy. Protestant Church laws follow the basic pattern of use established by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, though there is much dispute over specific laws. The area of most dispute between

³²² CD IV, 2. 676.

Protestants and Catholics regarding Church law is on the range of authority.

It is significant that the topic of Church law is raised by the Protestant voice in this ecumenical dialogue. Barth's section on Church law closes with the suggestion that all Church laws are correct, granting that they were agreed upon through earnest seeking after the will of the Holy Spirit. Laws from different denominations can be described as accurate, even if they contradict laws from other denominations. This suggestion will be explored further in this chapter and in the conclusion.

Barth presents five categories in his explanation of canon law. First, the law is helpful to bring necessary order to the organization. Next, the law should be a service, both to the human element within the Church and to God. Third, the law is an act of worship and is found in the worship structure of the Church. Fourth, the law is living. And, finally, the law is a part of the Church's evangelical message to the world. These five uses and expressions of the law within the Church are descriptions of order within the community, not necessarily prescriptions.

This is the longest chapter in this section of *Church Dogmatics* and the culmination of much of the groundwork laid in the previous four. The basic definitions of the true Church have been worked out. Descriptions of the types of growth sought by the Church and of the ("The Upholding of the Community) have been discussed. Knowing what the Church is, how it grows, and what restrains its growth, the order of the Church can be studied. As a "campaign against chaos and therefore against disorder"³²³ the shape of the community reflects general orientation of its mission, toward the final reconciliation and victory over chaos.

³²³ CD IV, 2. 677.

I. Law and Order

Church law is found by seeking after Christ. In its inquiry into law and order, “[i]t is concretely to Scripture that the community has to listen.”³²⁴ Scripture does not provide a simple guide for Churches on matters of order, “merely to copy and adopt and imitate that which in response to His direction was achieved there and then.”³²⁵ Paying attention to the specific descriptions of the order of Old and New Testament communities may help to illuminate the character and form of a Christocentric community, but “not in order to reproduce it in the same form; but in order to induced by it to know Him there and then, yet also here and now.”³²⁶ Scripture is not a textbook.

It is through Scripture that the community seeks to hear God when inquiring after the laws of the Church. The forms of order found there are specific to the peoples, their time and their place. Learning of the character of God as head of a community, and observing the actions of the communities which treated him as such, provides the Church with a vision for how it will enforce its own law and order, seeking to continue to operate under the headship of Jesus Christ.

For Ratzinger, the law is absolutely necessary. It is not only important for maintaining and promoting order within the Christian community, but it is emblematic of the Christian age itself. In this age, God reveals himself, and offers communion with his people, through outward forms, which Ratzinger considers to be a potential stumbling block of the faith.³²⁷ The outward forms might seem to limit God, raising the question, “Does God dwell in institutions, events or

³²⁴ Ibid. 683.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ratzinger. *Introduction to Christianity*. 183.

words?”³²⁸ God certainly exists apart from those forms and is also free to interact with humanity as he wills, as he does often in that profound intimacy that draws individuals to salvation. But if this were the only way in which humanity interacted with God, with “only God and a collection of individuals [then] Christianity would be unnecessary.”³²⁹ The religion and the Church exist for the orderly integration of Christians into a community that encompasses history and the cosmos and anticipates a “consummation, which brings history to an inner totality.”³³⁰ The law is necessary for order and useful for the upbuilding of the community, in terms of the community's integration.

II. Law of Service

As a reflection, and as the governing power, of the Christian community, its law should necessarily reflect the ideals and values of the community. Above all, “the law to be sought and established and executed in the Christian community must always have the character and intention of a law of service.”³³¹ Service is the basic action of the Christian community, of its individuals and of its master.

As the head of the Church, Jesus leads it in its attitude of service. He provides an example of servant-leadership. He defied the logical, or expected, order by demonstrating the mutuality of his leadership and his humility. Each feeds the other. “It is as the humiliated Son of God that He is the exalted Son of Man.”³³² Following its head, the body (of Christ) “when its action is

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ratzinger. *Salt of the Earth*. 278.

³³¹ *CD IV*, 2. 690.

³³² Ibid.

service.”³³³

The order of the community is determined by an unearthly standard which commends the lowly and demeans the proud. To the individual Christian and to their community, “sanctification means exaltation, but because it is exaltation in fellowship with the One who came to serve it is exaltation to the lowliness in which He served and still serves, and rules as He serves.”³³⁴ The orientation of the Christian is toward sanctification, which is achieved through humble service. The basic premise of the law of the community then is service.

1. Total

That the law of the Church is one of service is irrefutable. Any claim that the law of the Church should be toward another end might be in keeping with the traditions and expectations of other human organizations, but is mistaken in regards to the Church. This is “unequivocal, non-dialectical and irreversible.”³³⁵

The law of service is not partial in any sense. All activities of the community are informed by this central attitude of service. Actions which do not qualify as service are “quite unlawful” and when found should “either be jettisoned as inessential and harmful ballast or made to serve.”³³⁶ The whole of the community's functions should be oriented toward service. That which is not should not be continued for the sake of tradition, or convenience, or any other reason.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid. 691.

³³⁵ *CD IV*, 2. 691.

³³⁶ *CD IV*, 2. 692.

The community serves “with the totality of its being and function.”³³⁷ Any attempts to divide the functions or offices of the Church into corridors for service and corridors of teaching, or of preaching, or of some other ministry, should be avoided. In every function and in every office the Church “must declare and maintain the radical openness of the whole life of the community for its determination to service.”³³⁸ Even the most mundane function of the Church operates in a spirit of service.

2. Universal

The law of service is not limited to those serving the Church as clergy, but extends to all Christians. Every member of the laity must be involved in some capacity. Barth contends that “there is something wrong with the community itself if even one of its members has dropped out of its ministry or never had a share in it.”³³⁹

The law of service is total and so its application must extend to all members. This is one of the ways in which the Church's members become integrated, into a unified whole, a goal discussed in the section on the “True Church.” The members of the body cannot work in isolation but must truly integrate, “considering all the other spheres for which [their] own service will always have indirect significance, and may even acquire and have direct significance as in the pursuit of his concerns he is also involved in the problems of these other spheres as well.”³⁴⁰ The process of integration is not only a social project but one that is affected, and at least partly determined, by the Christian's life of service. As the individual members integrate so does their

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid. 693.

³³⁹ *CD* IV, 2. 693-4.

³⁴⁰ Ibid. 694.

work integrate and so does their service affect the work and service of the other members and the work and the service of the community as an organization.

The universal application of the law of service is based on the “priesthood of all believers.”³⁴¹ This is a concept which Barth maintains must be protected and defended, even suggesting that Christians should “avoid the fatal word 'office' and replace it by 'service,'”³⁴² because the latter can be applied universally to Christians. This egalitarian approach does not deny the necessity of the clerical offices, but rather seeks to engage all Christians in service. The distinctions between clergy and laity can imply passivity to the lay Christian, so Barth suggests such distinctions be spoken of carefully to emphasize the necessity that every Christian be active in service.

Where Barth describes service as the theme of Christian life and therefore also of Church law, Ratzinger simplifies his own description, explaining that “the real basic law of Christian existence is expressed in the preposition 'For.’”³⁴³ This “real basic law” orients the Christian to action *for* the other, rather than to action for herself, or himself. It is a departure from selfishness and toward service. Christ demonstrated this attitude and the doctrines of the religion confirm it as standard for the Church.

Ratzinger does not only identify service as central to the Christian's, and therefore the Church's, life. Like Barth, he draws the link between service and worship. In this case, the “for” is directed toward God. At the same time, the worshippers unite with each other in a distinct, but closely related, act of selflessness. The Christian comes together with other Christians in worship, “leaving behind the privateness and peace of his 'I' to follow the crucified Christ and

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ratzinger. *Introduction to Christianity*. 189.

exist for others.”³⁴⁴ The self is absorbed in worship of God, and for God. This act of worship is then a catalyst which engages the individual in a life of service for others.

This relinquishment of self interest is a theme emphasized throughout Ratzinger's work. “Christian faith is not based on the atomized individual but comes from the knowledge that there is no such thing as the mere individual, that on the contrary man is himself only when he is fitted into the whole.”³⁴⁵ He cites Augustine's concept of the Eucharist being a tool for unifying Christians into a single body. As normal bread is taken in and assimilated into its eater, the bread of the Eucharist is stronger than the human eating and so the opposite occurs. The human eating the bread is assimilated into the bread, and into the body of Christ, which is its true nature. The relinquishment of self is achieved in the Eucharist, which is “communication with all who belong to him [Christ].”³⁴⁶ The reorientation of selfish interests to selfless is a standard Christian value which finds its expression in the act of worship. Ratzinger takes this concept as an extension of the law of service, which pervades Church life.

III. Liturgical Law

1. Ordered by Divine Service

The law of the Church is “primarily established” in “the event of divine worship.”³⁴⁷ In the gatherings of Christians, which Barth describes in its simplest terms as “two or three gathered in His name,”³⁴⁸ and during which reaction to God's Word is the primary activity. The participants

³⁴⁴ Ibid. 190.

³⁴⁵ Ibid. 184.

³⁴⁶ Ratzinger. *The Church as Communion*. 78.

³⁴⁷ CD IV, 2. 698.

³⁴⁸ Ibid. 699.

“speak with and to one another in human words.”³⁴⁹ This is worth mentioning because it emphasizes the human aspect of worship. It is a human action; a human reaction to the Word of God. As such, it can take the form of singing, preaching, the recitation of a creed, or any number of activities. It is not bound by the external actions, “[b]ut it will take place decisively in free witness, bound only to its object,”³⁵⁰ being the Word of God and the faithful expression and reception of it.

The event of Christian worship is a human affair, where the participants actively acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters of each other, but also “of this First-begotten.”³⁵¹ Christians are just truly brothers and sisters to each other as they are the brothers and sisters of Jesus. The worship event, through the lens of being within the family of Christ, allows them to see the physical dimension of the Church as Christ's Body. The Holy Spirit, the brotherhood of believers, “the knowledge and faith and love and hope to which He has awakened themselves and the others”³⁵² are still invisible. But the physical dimension, in which the sacraments are performed and in which the individual Christians “are baptised” announcing their need “of the forgiveness of their sins, of justification and sanctification, of conversion,”³⁵³ make visible the spiritual truths. Awareness of the physical dimension indicates, but does not prove, the spiritual.

As the Christians are baptised and as they claim a place of brotherhood and unity within the community, they are finding “acceptance into the body of Jesus Christ.”³⁵⁴ It is mutually agreed that they are baptised into this life and into this fellowship “not in the name of the

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Ibid. 700.

³⁵¹ Ibid. 701.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid. 702.

community, but in the name of its Lord.”³⁵⁵ The community itself is not suitable to be the subject of the Church's worship or of its law. Being under this sign of Christ and accepting that all other members are also under this sign, the community is able to truly integrate. Integration “could not take place were it not for the presence in the midst of the One who has brought them together.”³⁵⁶ The baptism in the name of Jesus is the way the individuals claim Christ and it is the way they claim their spot in the community. When the community comes together, it is thus “a fellowship of baptism.”³⁵⁷ Worship is the event which sees these baptised individuals continually brought together. It is on their baptism that their freedom to act within the community is based.

The expectation of Christians is for eternal life. As they gather, they worship and commune in anticipation of “the attainment of their life in this form,”³⁵⁸ the form being the eternal state. The hope for eternal life, which every human is appointed to,³⁵⁹ is made known within the Christian community. Regarding the question of eternal life, the community gathers “because they know that the answer to this question can be received only unitedly in the Christian community as the provisional representation of the whole race for which it has already taken place and which needs to receive it.”³⁶⁰ The community gathers to celebrate the eternal life that they expect to receive themselves and that they believe awaits the rest of humanity.

Worship is a human reaction to God. It is the basis on which the law of the Church is established. It is the gathering of believers into an integrated family and it is the event by which they anticipate eternal life. The actions performed at these gatherings are prayer and the

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

sacraments.

The prayers of the community are by people who are aware of the problems of the world and are privy to the solutions, but who are themselves sinful and incapable of achieving the solutions on their own power. So they pray that God would affect the changes in the world that he had promised.³⁶¹ The action of prayer of course may be conducted privately. However, prayer “finds its true and proper form in the prayer of the assembled community; in the united calling upon God.”³⁶² The corporate prayers of Christians are “true and proper” not only because the communal performance provides comforts that individual prayer might not, but also because communal prayer affirms the continuation of the tradition of the “Our Father” prayer instituted by Jesus and “the fact that in it Jesus ranges Himself alongside His disciples.”³⁶³ Christians pray together as brothers and sisters of Christ, who might take those prayers as his own.

The community gathers to perform the sacraments. Chief among these is the Lord's Supper, which provides the community a reaffirmation of the promise of eternal life.³⁶⁴ Barth emphasizes the spiritual aspect of the Lord's Supper as it is performed in an otherwise mundane and earthly manner. The people are gathered and the food is eaten, as one would find any group of people gathering and eating together at any given moment. But the difference is that Jesus “brings them to it...invites them...is the Lord and Host...[and] is Himself, indeed, their food and drink.”³⁶⁵ The physical reality at once shrouds and attests to the spiritual reality behind it. The community eats and drinks seeking nourishment from their Lord, but it is not physical nourishment only. It is spiritual, in the sense that the whole story of Christ encoded is in the

³⁶¹ Ibid. 704.

³⁶² Ibid. 705.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid. 703.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

ritual. In the performance of the Lord's Supper “there takes place here and now exactly the same as took place there and then between Himself and His first disciples.”³⁶⁶ The remembrance of the event, in the presence of Jesus who invited and makes possible the continued performance of it, becomes a conduit of power and comfort for the community. The physical act of uniting for the sacrament welcomes the spiritual reality of the unity shared with Christ and the Church, which in turn, makes concrete the hope for the physical eternal life. The layers of the event cannot be easily separated or isolated. Each feeds into the other and each is fed by the other. On the ground level, the Church is a gathering of humans in a provisional community to announce the future state of all of humanity. As they gather, they eat and drink in the Lord's name and at the Lord's invitation. This physical action attests to the spiritual reality, through which is promised the perfection of the physical reality. So the physical reveals the spiritual which conforms the physical.

The Lord's Supper is an activity that only makes sense for the Church to celebrate in its provisional state. As an act that feeds the Christian and their community and as an act that anticipates eternal life, it is quite clearly only for this age. In the age to come, at the *parousia*, the Church will not have to anticipate eternal life and it will not have to be fed by Christ in the same manner as they will live in his presence. Provisionally in the place of all men, the community, in its reaching out in all its members for eternal life necessarily lives by and in the fact that in its life here and now there may be this reflection and imitation.

2. Law Continually Found in Liturgy

God's relationship to the law is found in “His own presence and lordship in its assembling

³⁶⁶ Ibid. 704.

for divine service.”³⁶⁷ As the community assembles, it is in the presence of its lord. The gathering is not only concerning him, but actually involves him. He is “present in their human action as the Lord of their confession, of their coming from baptism and going to the Lord's Supper, of their united calling upon God.” The basic actions of their liturgy allow the community to commune with its lord. Jesus is present in the community's worship. Barth also asserts that Jesus is himself “their law.”³⁶⁸ Jesus is their law and their liturgy is communion with him, so the liturgy is the venue in which their law is found.

The human reaction to the divine presence in worship allows for an egalitarian approach to the drafting of canon law. As Jesus is the law and the drafting of the law is done by humans, there is a levelling effect. There can be no human better than another at the Eucharist plate. Where there might be some belief in superiority or inferiority prior to the event of the community coming together, this is undone by the event because “none can argue that he has any less need of God or claim any higher access.”³⁶⁹

3. Church Law is Human

The actual work of constructing a Church law is a human action. There is the constant seeking after God, but the answers to the questions will be in the form of human confession. God is the source, in the sense that he is the subject of the community's gathering and Scripture is the reference for their inquiring. But it is the words and thoughts of humans ultimately that decides on Church law.

The many questions which Church law must address “can be gathered up in the one

³⁶⁷ *CD* IV, 2. 706.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 709.

question how the community thinks that itself and its members are brought under discipline by its Lord at this centre of its life, and are thus to bring and keep themselves under discipline.”³⁷⁰

The question is answered by the community, but with its access to Scripture and with its relationship to God.

IV. Living Law

The law of the Church is “living law.”³⁷¹ It is living in the sense that the subject of the law is living. The law is not merely given by Christ to the Church, in a sense, “the living Lord Jesus is the law to which it is obedient.”³⁷² The danger inherent in this position is that the law would become subject to the whims of the community, reflecting the interests of the flawed humans. This can be solved by a “constant re-investigation by a community which is open for new direction and instruction (not from below but from above), and is therefore willing and ready for new answers.”³⁷³ The source of these changes is still invisible and silent, so the problem persists.

Although Church law is living, it is not unstructured. The flexibility suggested in the description “living” is not such that the law of the Church can be imprecise. Canon law must be “willing and ready for new answers,” but those answers should be “specific...not be arbitrary...of attention and obedience...definite...have legal form and precision.”³⁷⁴ As the Church seeks the living law, and the Holy Spirit who directs it, the answers it receives must “involve the establishment and execution of ecclesiastical and congregational ordinances in which one thing

³⁷⁰ Ibid. 710.

³⁷¹ *CD* IV, 2. 710.

³⁷² Ibid. 711.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

is commanded, another forbidden and third permitted.”³⁷⁵ Precision in goal and expression is required.

Church law is distinct from other human laws in its insistence that it is living and that it is under the lordship of Jesus Christ. These distinctions from other human laws may seem to indicate a divine origin of the law, however Barth maintains that this is definitively incorrect. Canon law is a human law, under some divine direction but ultimately in the hands of humans. The canon laws will reflect the liturgical event, though the laws “themselves will not be liturgical...[n]or will they will be theological.”³⁷⁶ Church law “is human law drawn up in view of the confession and therefore of the man who confesses it.”³⁷⁷ Church law is based upon “the *ius divinum* of Christocracy”³⁷⁸ which affords it a certain liberty. With the *ius divinum* as “its origin but also its limit,”³⁷⁹ Church law is followed with the acknowledgement of the distinctions between divine and human laws. This is a distinction unknown by other purely human laws. Having this distinction in view can ensure that the living law really continues on living within the community. That is, its freedom to change and to adapt is under the guiding hand of God himself, making the Church and its law subject to him

The law is strictly human, but it is accepted after sincere and prayerful searching after the will of the Holy Spirit. Considering the community's developments and the nature of the law as living, the question of what these changes might consist of arises. If the law was arrived at by a community of the past that “was not dreaming or playing yesterday, but genuinely praying and

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid. 707.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid. 713.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

working,”³⁸⁰ then it must be followed today. Though they are to be followed, these laws should never be considered a requirement for salvation. “Hence the community will refuse to regard as necessary to salvation, or to invest with divine authority, the work of its obedience, and therefore the ecclesiastical propositions which it discovered and enforced yesterday.”

However, the community “cannot think that it has really been so faithful and successful a pupil in His school that no further instruction and better learning are required.”³⁸¹ As such, there can never be complete confidence that the law is ever in its fullest form. This is the nature of operating as a provisional community. As a community seeks God for instruction on their laws, there is a confidence permitted that their inquiry would lead to the appropriate response relative to “specific times and circumstances, to the life of the community in a particular stage of its history.”³⁸² Because of this relative nature to it, “we cannot possibly ascribe perfection and therefore permanent validity and divine authority to the result of its inquiry and concern.”³⁸³ The previous iterations and changes to the law should be followed. This means that the changes that are made are not to be viewed as amendments which contradict previous decisions, but as improvements.

V. Exemplary Law

As a tool of the community, Church law is subject to the mission of the community, which is directed both inward and outward. So the law is useful not only for the Church, but also in the Church's mission to the rest of the world. Certain aspects of Church law might be applied

³⁸⁰ Ibid. 714.

³⁸¹ Ibid. 715.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid.

to other human laws in a consulting capacity.

The improvement of worldly law by the application of certain principles from Church law expresses itself in several ways. One message that the world might receive about Church law is its abandonment of certain principles that have driven the world's laws. For instance, Church law “has completely transcended the dialectic of fulfilment and claim, of dignity and responsibility, of taking and giving.”³⁸⁴ This radical reversal of values can be seen as an insight offered by the Church to the world. The order of transaction can be, if not replaced, challenged by the Church's order of service.

Another possible way that Church law can illuminate worldly law is by its declaration that humanity “is not qualified to be the subject of law.”³⁸⁵ The one qualified subject of law is of course Jesus Christ. Both laws are human but Church law is also superior, in one sense only. That is, on its “cognitive basis,”³⁸⁶ because Church law acknowledges Christ as its lord and its worldly counterpart, also under the lordship of Christ, does not acknowledge Christ as its lord, though he is.

To worldly law, Church law demonstrates fellowship. The world cannot match the Church for its commitment to “a total common and reciprocal responsibility.”³⁸⁷ Implementation of such a value is likely not possible within the world's systems. However the example set by the Church in this regard might help to improve its worldly counterpart, even if the Church's model of fellowship were partially adopted. The value the Church puts on integration can be an example to the world. Rather than respecting one member more than another based on class or

³⁸⁴ Ibid. 723.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid. 725.

³⁸⁷ Ibid. 724.

wealth, the Church treats each of its members “absolutely as a brother.”³⁸⁸

The level on which worldly and Church law interact is lateral, in that both are human. While the goal is not to simply “to claim that the law valid in the church must also be the law of the state and other human societies,”³⁸⁹ it can interact in a spirit of mutual sharing. The ways in which Church law can provide an example of law for the world are all on a horizontal plane, from one human law to another. These examples are of course provisional and imperfect. The community “cannot exemplify the law of God directly, but only in the broken form of its human law.”³⁹⁰

VI. Chapter Conclusion

We can see that Ratzinger and Barth have agreed on these several principles of Christian life. Of the necessity of the Church and its order for Christians and for the world, of the law of service which underlies all Christian activity, and of these virtues being localized in the liturgy, they agree. These are different in their expressions but the conclusions are compatible. Despite their agreement on the various issues raised in the four chapters of *CD* discussed in this thesis, the final issue is the most important.

Barth builds the case for the importance of Church law in the first three chapters of his section. With that established by this final chapter, the entire section culminates in a discussion of mutual tolerance of the laws of other Church denominations. It is one thing for representatives of different denominations to agree on principles of ecclesiology, even on specifics about canon law and its source and implementation. But the ecumenical dialogue hinges on the compatibility of their thoughts on this topic.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid. 720.

³⁹⁰ Ibid. 721.

Their respective denominations may not follow the laws of the other at any point in the foreseeable future, or make its members responsible for the adherence to the laws of the other, but there can be mutual respect that might transcend the particulars and lead to greater unity within the catholic Church. Barth argues that the law discovered, or decided upon, by a community is not necessarily appropriate for universal application, despite the prayerful inquiry which led to its adoption. The laws of the Church at hand are not for all Churches and neither are the laws of other Churches “to be imposed on us,”³⁹¹ even assuming they have been accepted after a similarly prayerful and earnest inquiry. The laws of the Churches are never to be considered complete or perfect, and it is in the acceptance of this description that the various Christian Churches may enjoy some unity, despite the diversity of their internal laws.

This rather long, but extremely important, selection from Barth will help to conclude matters. The whole dialogue, with its moments of continuity and its moments of discontinuity, rests on the agreement the two share on this theme of the Order of the Community. This passage is the centrepiece of the entire section on *The Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian Community*.

No Church order is perfect, for none has fallen directly from heaven and none is identical with the basic law of the Christian community. Even the orders of the primitive New Testament community (whatever form they took) were not perfect, nor are those of the Western Papacy, the Eastern Patriarchate, the Synodal Presbyterianism which derives from Calvin's system, Anglican, Methodist, Neo-Lutheran and other forms of the Episcopacy, or Congregationalism with its sovereignty of the individual community. Nor are the orders of all different systems which are derivative variations of these basic types. There is no reason to look down proudly and distastefully from one to the others. At one time they may all have been living law sought and in a certain exaggeration found in obedience, and therefore legitimate forms of the body of Jesus Christ. Indeed, they may be this still. Thus for all the problems to which they give rise they must be respected by the others. Indeed, as we question how we ourselves are fixed in relation to living law; whether the removal of the beam in our own eye (Mt. 7:4) is not a more urgent task than concern about the mote

³⁹¹ CD IV, 2. 718.

in our brother's eye; and whether in the last analysis we do not need to learn from this brother something for our own reformation.³⁹²

It is on this ground that Ratzinger must agree. If he does not then this entire project concludes with a simple No and attempts at furthering this dialogue must find another path though this gate appears closed. If he agrees on this, then all areas of their respective ecclesiologies may be compared. This project will conclude not only with a Yes but also with the door to future dialogues opened.

Ratzinger appeals to a very basic Christianity that transcends practical, human differences. He agrees with Barth. In his 1971 book *The Unity of the Nations*, he wrote, “To believe in God means to believe in truth; to believe in Christ means to believe in its accessibility and in the community that results from the truth and in that very way frees us from the arbitrary stipulations of human praxis.”³⁹³

At Vatican II, Ratzinger supported the drafting of an ecclesiological statement on the non-Catholic Churches.³⁹⁴ He supported the Constitution on the Church which widened the requirements of Church membership to include spiritual elements, therefore “Church membership is no longer defined in a way that is purely institutional.”³⁹⁵ This freedom to embrace the relational aspect frees the Church, in all its forms, to approach reconciliation on a workable platform. This attitude of continuing the dialogue accords with Ratzinger's assessment of ecumenical movements. He was quite clear that it “must not mean concealing truth so as not to displease others,” rather, “Ecumenical must mean that we give proper attention to the truth

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Heim. 363.

³⁹⁴ Ibid. 303.

³⁹⁵ Ibid. 304.

which another has, and to another's serious Christian concern in a matter in which he differs from us, or even errs.”³⁹⁶ He recommends each side fully share their positive beliefs, because concealing the truth makes the dialogue shallow.

³⁹⁶ Ratzinger. *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*. 45-6.

Conclusion

Section 67 of *Church Dogmatics*, taken in its entirety, first proves the necessity and importance of Church law and second indicates Barth's ecumenical program of doctrinal agreement with flexibility of Church law. He offers an argument for ecumenism on the grounds of Church law. But the ecumenism explored here is not thorough and it is not for practical reunification. Rather it exposes a problem that every practical ecumenical effort must face: how to reconcile conflicting Church laws. Barth answers that it is possible that each community decided upon its own laws, after careful inquiry and that each is correct, despite any contradictions between denominations or individual Churches. He does not suggest peace based on social tolerance but tolerance based on a mutual acceptance of the theory that God might influence different communities to accept different laws specific to their community, and that these are true despite any contradictions between the laws of the communities. He is in accord with *Lumen Gentium*, which was written a decade later. That document states, "The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter."³⁹⁷

Each chapter of §67 consists of an exploration of its specific topic and a contribution to the wider theme of the section.

The opening chapter, on the true Church, identifies the features of a Church operating under the provision of God, though Barth does not offer a list of external attributes that would simplify the identification of true Churches. Regarding the overall theme of the section, this

³⁹⁷ *Lumen Gentium*. 15.

chapter contributes divine verifiability of the Church, which will come into question regarding the composition of Church laws in the final chapter.

The second chapter, on the growth of the community, discusses the importance of numeric and spiritual growth of the Church. This chapter builds on the first and anticipates the later two. A true Church grows spiritually, attending to the voice of God with finer and finer clarity. As the community grows, it must listen more carefully to avoid the dangers, that were presented in the next chapter, and to heed the guidance of God offered in the field of Church law.

Barth's third chapter discusses the dangers of the Church and its place within the world. The promise of deliverance through these dangers is examined and found to be granted on the basis of Jesus' ministrations to the Church. He is present and he gives the Church its freedom to continue its worship. The worship is then where the law is developed.

All of this section builds to the question of Church law. For the community to grow, it must accept order. Barth concludes the chapter on Church law with the concept of unity in diversity. The laws can be true and they can be diverse.

Barth's dialogue with Catholicism stretched across his entire career. Where a professional friendliness in person gave way to a polemical written word, Barth's interactions with Catholicism were not very promising. However, the publication of Hans Urs von Balthasar's highly influential review of Barth's theology reignited interest from the Catholic side and in Barth about Catholicism. The volume of *Church Dogmatics* discussed in this thesis was published just four years after Balthasar's book and undoubtedly composed, to some degree, in the light of it.

The ecumenical attitude of Barth is more pronounced here than in his earlier work, in which his sharp criticisms of Catholic theology are delivered. His willingness to consider unity with the Catholic Church, and unity among all the Churches, is expressed in his description of the Church's task of integration. Recall from Chapter Two, in a discussion of the true Church, that the building up of the community is integration. New members are integrated and old members are continually reoriented to accommodate the new. This creates a constant movement that is at once welcoming to newcomers and invigorating to the established members; all members are affected by the growth of the Church. Discussing Church law, in the last chapter of the section of *CD* titled *The Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian Community*, Barth indicates his belief that the laws of each denomination are valid for their particular needs. The criticisms launched against a given Church from any other Church on the matter of law is unnecessary and detrimental to not only relations between the denominations, but also may stymie any reformation efforts of the Church lodging the complaint.

Opposing that approach, “[w]hat is needed is openness and readiness to learn in the comparison of different forms. What is needed is a sincere ecumenical encounter—which will lead to integration as well as to debate.”³⁹⁸ The Churches might integrate with each other. This is a great ecumenical hope from the man who had considered it “impossible ever to become a Roman Catholic.”³⁹⁹ Of course, it is not a simple matter, but one that would lead to debate. Integration is the building up of the Church, both horizontally and vertically. The unity of the Churches requires humility.

Recalling Pope John XXIII's address which opened Vatican II, Ratzinger was particularly

³⁹⁸ *CD* IV, 2. 718.

³⁹⁹ *CD* I, 1. xiii.

struck by his grace and warmth in welcoming the representatives of non-Catholic Churches who were serving as observers. The future pope commented, “the pope had turned to the separated brethren and sincerely expressed his desire to find ways to overcome the divisiveness of history, in which the burden of guilt is carried by both sides, and which can be bridged only in the spirit of love. This love must abandon all petty calculation and must look ahead to the Lord and not backward to selfish interests.” This approach to ecumenism honours the spirit of the Christian and of the Church that he or she might belong to. Ratzinger and Barth both come to the conclusion that the law may change from community to community but that each Church is truly a Church and its members may engage as brothers and sisters with the members of a Church of another denomination.

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